



GULIELMUS LUPTON S.T.D.

G. Vertue Sculp. 1747.



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T W E L V E
S E R M O N S

Preach'd on several

OCCASIONS.

By the REVEREND

WILLIAM LUPTON, D.D.

Late Prebend of *Durham*, and Preacher to the
Honourable Society of *Lincoln's-Inn*.



L O N D O N,

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SERMONS

Preached at the

OCCASIONS



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T H E

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at St.
Mary's, Nov. 24, 1706.

The Eternity of Future Punishment,
Proved and Vindicated.

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The Eternity of Future Punishment Proved and Vindicated.

MATTH. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment.

THough God hath revealed the Eternal duration of Future Punishment in the Plainest and most Positive terms; yet the Impious glosses of some, and the dictates of an Immoderate self-love in others have represented this Important Article of our Faith as Absurd and Incredible.

'Tis the Interest of some men, and therefore their Endeavour, to raise out

of their Minds all the notions of a Future State. Sensual pleasures have so intirely ingrossed their Affections, that they would not Willingly leave this present world, though in exchange for mansions of Bliss in the next: Or, if there be some faint desires of Heaven still remaining, as doubtless they must desire it upon this account, that this State of things, which is so dear to them, must Necessarily have an End; yet when, upon reflection, they find no hopes of attaining what they thus wish for out of Necessity, not of Choice, they then Wrest and Force their Reason in contriving Schemes of Imaginary Comfort: They then boldly play all the engines that can be invented against the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, or Industiously pervert the proper sense of them: They then labour to persuade themselves and others, by Arguments which themselves can never Heartily believe, that though there be a supreme Being, *which made the earth and created man upon it*, yet there is no reason to doubt, that a Being of such wonderful Excellency and Perfection will
be

be so favourable to them, the work of his own hands, let their behaviour be what it will, as not to plunge them into Endless and Intolerable Misery; that therefore they seem to be under no very strict obligation to afflict themselves continually with severe and Vexatious restraints, but may reasonably enough venture to gratify all their Inclinations and Desires; that therefore they do not seem to have any other business in this world but that of the *Leviathan* in the deep, to take their pastime therein.

And there is too plain an occasion given to these Enemies of the Lord thus to Blaspheme, by others, who though they profess a Belief of the Scriptures, do yet, in a great measure, destroy the expectation of eternal Punishment, by some mistaken opinions concerning God and ourselves. They cannot apprehend how any thing so Terrible and Amazing as Everlasting misery, Terrible and Amazing beyond all expression, should be the portion of such a Noble and Excellent Being as Man, the Perfection and Excellency of whose Nature God himself

hath so remarkably signalized his esteem of, in the death of his only begotten Son, for our benefit and advantage; how God's Infinite Goodness should be compatible with Man's Endless Misery, or how that Disproportion, which there seems to be betwixt Momentary Transgressions and Everlasting Punishment, should be Reconcilable with Infinite justice.

Thus, out of an Immoderate Esteem and love of Themselves, they lay too much stress upon some of the Divine Attributes, and too little upon others, and persuade themselves into an Acquiescence under so agreeable a delusion, from the very Principles of the Covenant of Grace, converting even the Revelations of God's Infinite Mercy and Love to mankind, into Instruments of their own extreme Danger, making those very *things that should have been for their wealth, become unto them an occasion of falling.* And they take great Pains to confirm these False reasonings, about the Divine Attributes and the Excellencies of Humane nature, by their Mistaken Interpretations of those
texts

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texts in Holy Scripture, wherein God hath revealed the Nature and Circumstances of Future punishment. I shall therefore, in discoursing upon these words, endeavour

I. *First*, Directly to prove the Eternity of punishment in a Future State, and

II. *Secondly*, To answer the Principal objections, that have been made against it. And

I. *First*, The Direct proof of Eternal punishment in a Future state falls within a very small compass, depending upon the concurrent evidence of a few texts in Holy Scripture; as when our Blessed Saviour, having immediately before given an account of his Solemn and Glorious appearance to Judge the world, and of his approving and accepting the Faithful and Obedient, lays down the sentence of Condemnation to be pronounced upon the Wicked in these words, * *Depart from me ye cursed, into Everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And the text assures us, that as the Form of the Sentence thus pronounced does e-

* Matth. xxv. 41.

vince, that 'tis Final and Unalterable, so the Consequences of it shall be Immediately executed; both the Righteous and the Wicked shall presently enter upon the Different states thus Finally allotted them: There is nothing more to be feared by the one, or hoped by the other, but immediately after Judgment thus passed, *These * shall go away into Everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life Eternal.* And we are further confirmed in the Belief of this by our Saviour, *Mar. ix.* at the 43. and following *Verses*, where he thrice styles the state of future misery, *The fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched*, as if he did industriously Anticipate every the least degree of hope, that the punishment of Wicked Men shall ever have an end. To this account which our Saviour hath given us may be added that Remarkable passage, where 'tis said of the Wicked, that they *shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his Indignation, and shall be tormented*

* Matth. xxv. 46.

*with fire * and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb; and the Smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.*

The certainty therefore of everlasting Happiness prepared for Good men, which no body is inclined either to Disbelieve or Dispute, is not more plain and clear than the eternal Misery of the Wicked; which yet hath been Question'd by some, and boldly Contradicted by others, upon several Principles, all which seem to be manifestly trivial and groundless, as may appear from what is in the second place proposed, *viz.*

II. *Secondly*, The solution of the Principal Ojections that have been made against the Eternity of Future punishment. And

1st. I shall take notice of the Notion commonly charged upon *Origen*; That after the Wicked have, for a long time, endured the punishment inflicted upon them at the day of Judgment, they will be, at last, translated from Misery into the state of the Blessed; a Notion which there is not one tolerable Reason brought to prove, there being nothing, from

* Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

which it can be deduced, in holy Scripture. For the texts alledged in favour of it, which St. *Jerom** recites, do plainly relate either to God's Goodness in General, as, *Pf. xxxi. 19. O how great is thy Goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee?* or, to God's deliverance of the Jews from Affliction, as, *Mich. vii. 9. I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause and execute Judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness;* or, to the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, as, *Rom. xi. 25, 26. Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved.* And this is a full answer to those Testimonies of Scripture which are urged upon this Occasion.

St. *Austin*† considers this Notion as proceeding from an Excessive Compassion in the Authors of it. And *Theophylact* censures *Origen*‡ as a Trifler in this point, concluding it Impossible, that those, who

* Comment. in Is. lxvi.

† De Civ. Dei. l. 21. c. 17.

‡ Comment. in Matth. 25.

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shall be, in the General Judgment, condemned to a State of punishment for their sins, should ever be numbred amongst the Righteous and partake with them in the Joys of Heaven: And the Reason is such as can never be answer'd, that 'tis Impossible for those to Repent and be Converted, who are finally deprived of the means of Grace, and already consigned to the place of Torment; and there is no Possibility of obtaining the happiness of Heaven by any other means, or upon any other terms than Repentance and Conversion. And this leads me to the consideration of a

2^d Objection, that though wicked men should be for ever excluded the Kingdom of Heaven, yet they are not Capable of subsisting for ever under that other punishment, the punishment of *Sense*, which is denounced and described in Holy Scripture; that they must of necessity be at last quite consumed by that fire which shall never be quenched, and so their Misery must end in their utter Extinction. Upon this, some Writers have taken a great deal of pains in
ransacking

ransacking the Histories of Nature; to find out such creatures as are able to bear the extreme heat of fire so as neither to perish, nor be in any measure wasted by it. How successful they have been in these enquiries I shall not examine; nor do I lay any stress upon such discoveries and the Arguments drawn from them. For there is another consideration, from which any one, who believes a God and the Holy Scriptures, may furnish himself with a full answer to this difficulty, the consideration of God's Power.

Indeed we cannot conclude the Existence of any thing from God's Power to effect it, if his Power be consider'd separately from the Revelation of his Will. But when he hath plainly and Positively revealed any thing, the Nature of which we cannot clearly comprehend, we may and ought stedfastly to believe it upon this Principle, that though it may be Impossible with Man, it is Possible with God. We have the very same reason to rest in a Belief, that God's Power will effect whatsoever he hath declared

red shall be, though we cannot account for it, as that he hath effected those things that have been, which likewise are to us Unaccountable. We have not more reason to believe that the three Children survived the flames of the fiery Furnace, without being in the least Injured or Affected by them, than that the Wicked shall endure the most exquisite torments of Unquenchable fire in the world to come. But there is

3^{ly}, Another objection which strikes at this very Revelation of God's Will, upon which, in conjunction with the consideration of his Power, we thus build our Belief of the Article. 'Tis urged, that some things are in Scripture represented as *Eternal* or *Everlasting*, which yet are of a finite Duration; as *Is. lx. 15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and bated, so that no man went through thee; I will make thee an Eternal excellency; and Gen. xvii. 8. I will give unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a Stranger, all the land of Canaan for an Everlasting possession.* But the answer is easy and satisfactory, That 'tis plain

plain from the nature and circumstances of the things, which the terms *Everlasting* and *Eternal* are in these and the like texts applied to; that they are There used with Limitation and Restriction; whereas it cannot be denied, that they do in their most Proper and Strict Sense denote an Endless duration: And that they are always used in this most Proper and Strict Sense, when applied to Future punishment, is certain from those other expressions, whereby the same Future punishment is represented and described, as in the text above cited, where 'tis called * *the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, and where 'tis positively declared, that the Wicked † *shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*, and that ‡ *the Smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*; Expressions these so clear and full, that scarce any words can more certainly and plainly signify an Endless duration both of the torment and the Persons that are to endure it. For, as the Learned and Judicious

* Mark ix. 43, 44.

† Rev. xx. 10.

‡ Rev. xiv. 11.

Bishop *Pearson* excellently argues, "If
" the Fire, in which the Reprobates are
" to be tormented, be Everlasting; if so
" absolutely Everlasting that it never shall
" be quenched; if so certainly never
" to be quenched, that the Smoke there-
" of shall ascend for ever and ever; if
" those which are cast into it shall be
" tormented for ever and ever, (all
" which the Scriptures expressly teach;)
" then shall the Wicked be Coeternal to
" the tormenting Flames." The tor-
ment shall be Everlastingly endured by
the Wicked. And this suggests a

4th Objection, in confirmation of the
last mention'd, from the Testimony of
Scripture, That Wicked men shall be
Annihilated.

Disconsolate and miserable indeed must
mens condition be, when Destruction
becomes matter of hope, when they would
be glad to take Sanctuary even in An-
nihilation; and much more Miserable
still, when disappointed of this Frightful
refuge it self, which is no otherwise to
be hoped for from the Holy Scriptures
than

than by the plain Misinterpretation of them.

The first text alledged in favour of this Dismal expectation is that of our Saviour, * *Fear him which is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*; from which they would have it believed, that Wicked men shall vanish into Air or into nothing, that they shall be, by the wrath of the Almighty, utterly consumed and cease to have a Being. But that there is no such thing implied in the Word ἀπολέσαι, which we here render to *Destroy*, may appear, as from a great many other texts; so particularly from the 39th verse of the same Chapter, where our Saviour declares, that whosoever loseth his life for His sake shall find it, in these words; ὁ ἀπολέσας τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆς, &c. where there can be no such thing as Annihilation understood, unless those, who suffer Martyrdom for Christianity, are to be Annihilated, which will scarce be affirmed; or, if it should, then how can he, who so loseth his Life, be said to find it?

* Mat. x. 28.

And

And as this word does not imply Annihilation, properly so called, so neither does it always denote Dissolution, but is used to signify *Misery* alone, as may appear from 1 Cor. v. 5. παραδέναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον, &c. *to deliver such an one unto Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh; that the Spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* That by the *Destruction of the Flesh* we are here to understand *Misery* suffered in this Life seems very plain from the end of it here assigned, namely, the Salvation of the Offender: For if the means of Salvation be peculiar to this State, and if the *Destruction* here mention'd were means of Salvation, which the Apostle expressly affirms, it must of necessity denote punishment suffer'd in this State.

And though it should be granted, that this Temporal punishment did not only continue till the Offender's Death, but was also the Occasion of it; yet that would not at all interfere with this interpretation of the text. For, that being granted, Death was only Accidental and Extrinssecal with respect to destruction,

tion, as here laid down; which, being plainly the means of the Offender's Salvation, and therefore of his Conversion, must necessarily be what he suffer'd before Death; which is still more clear from 1 Tim. i. 20. *Of whom is Hymeneus and * Alexander, whom I have deliver'd unto Satan, that they may Learn not to Blaspheme.* Another proof, and a very convincing one, that Destruction does sometimes in Holy Scripture signify Misery alone, may be taken from Mar. i. 24. *ἦλθες ἀπολεσαι ἡμᾶς;* art thou come to destroy us? Where 'tis not to be imagin'd, that by Destroying, Annihilation of the Devils is to be understood, or any thing but Misery to be inflicted on them, as is abundantly evident from a Parallel text, Mat. viii. 29. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? art thou come hither to Torment us before the time?*

That the Annihilation of the Wicked is not to be expected our Saviour does plainly intimate, where he thus affirms of him who must suffer the punishment of

* ἵνα παύσῃσι καὶ βλασφημεῖν

the

the world to come, * *Good were it for that man, if he had never been born:* For supposing the Annihilation of the Wicked, this solemn Affelevation of our Saviour signifies nothing at all; because, with respect to Happiness and Misery, 'tis the very same thing to be Annihilated, as never to have had a Being: Both cases are equally exclusive of Misery; for that which Suffers must Be. And therefore the difference here assigned by our blessed Saviour is necessarily and plainly this, That as the Wicked, if they had never been born, had never known Happiness, so they had never known Misery; whereas they must, as the case is now, suffer Misery for evermore.

And that this is strictly our Saviour's meaning in the very text objected is certain from *Luke xii. 5.* where that Evangelist hath recorded the very same passage, which we thus read *Matt. x. 28.* *Fear him which is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell,* and hath thus expressed it, *Fear him which, after he hath*

* Mar. xiv. 21.

killed, hath power to cast into Hell. So that if it be the safest and best method of explaining the Scriptures, as doubtless it is, to interpret one text by another, and especially in this case, where we have several relations of the very same passage, 'tis undeniable, that *Perishing* and *Destruction*, when applied to the disposal of Wicked men after Death, do always signify their being consigned to a state of Misery.

It is also certain, that this is the only thing meant by the *second Death*, another expression objected under this Argument. For this is the account we have *Rev. xx. 14.* *Death and Hell were cast into the lake of Fire; this is the second Death;* that is, after the general Resurrection and general Judgment mention'd at the *12th* and *13th verses*, Death shall be destroyed, as St. * *Paul* expresses it; There shall be no more Death, no Extinction, no future Dissolution; that lake of Fire, that State of Misery is the only *second Death*; Which is further

* 1 Cor. xv. 26.

confirmed.

confirmed, and that beyond all Contradiction and Evasion, *Rev. xxi. 8. The Fearful and Unbelieving, and Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Lyars shall have their part in that lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death.*

But after all; though the Scripture Testimonies, upon which this Article is built, be thus clear and evident, yet some men have been so Profanely and Blasphemously bold, as to question the Equity of God's purposes thus plainly revealed. But here, if ever, *Solomon's* observation is remarkably verified, that * *the Instruction of fools is folly.* For if we must be Reasoning about these Divine dispensations, the Consistency and Equity of them cannot but be discerned and owned even by Reason it self, so far at least, as to be more evident and convincing than any thing that can be urged in opposition to them. For

1st, As hath been observed, our Sins render us liable to Eternal Punishment,

* *Prov. xvi. 22.*

because the Majesty of God, against whom they are committed, is Infinite. For even in Humane Societies, an offence against a Magistrate is of a higher nature, and attended with more severe Punishment, than crimes committed against private Persons: And so as the Magistrate is more Eminent and Honourable, the Injuries or Indignities offer'd to him are still esteemed more Heinous, and have greater punishments annexed to them, in proportion to the Eminency and Honour of the Person offended. And therefore, since our Sins are Rebellion against God, who is infinite in Glory, and Power and all Perfection, the Guilt of them seems to be infinite; and upon this Account, since we are incapable of undergoing Punishment infinite in Degree, the infinite Duration of it is no more than proportionate to our Guilt.

2^{ly}, Those who die in a State of Impenitence would be actually disobedient and rebellious against God for evermore, if they were not removed out of this Life, the Scene of Action, and by that means rendered incapable of actual Disobedience, which

which nothing but the want of Power and Opportunity would prevent. And though they be deprived of that Power; yet they are Unalterably confirmed and established in the Habits of sin; they will for ever continue subject to those sinful qualities and dispositions which they have contracted, qualities that are directly opposed to the Purity and Holiness of the Divine Nature. And upon this account, their punishment is, to all intents and purposes, reconcileable with God's Justice, which, in a state of Punishment, not of Probation, does require the Execution of Vengeance upon his Enemies, so long as they continue so, and that is for ever and ever.

3^{ly}, The Eternity of punishment is plainly consistent with the Goodness of God upon this account, that he hath set before us Life and Death; the Happiness proposed is, at least, equal to the Misery denounced, and we may chuse our own Condition. Though Mankind was become Justly obnoxious to God's Wrath; yet he hath freely and graciously restored us to an Opportunity of avoid-

ing Misery, and obtaining Unconceivable Happiness at his own right hand for evermore. And this is properly the perfection of Goodness : But Goodness and Mercy themselves cannot save those, that will not comply with the terms of Goodness and Mercy.

These Answers, or such as these, at least joyntly consider'd seem abundantly sufficient to satisfy the Difficulties; though the contrary hath been insinuated in a discourse too well known, which was some years ago published by one, whose extraordinary Personal accomplishments and high Station in the Church do command so very great Deference, that it may perhaps be thought scarce allowable to mention any part of his Writings otherwise than with Approbation and Applause: But he hath in this particular, to the Disadvantage of the Article, made it very plain, that even the greatest men have their intervals of Misapprehension and Mistake. For he hath first urged several reasons to destroy these or the like Answers, and then undertaken to remove the Difficulties, by such solutions
of

of his own, as are so far from answering that end, and confirming the Truth of the Article, that they give manifest occasion to Disbelieve it. All which I shall take the liberty of examining and of endeavouring to refute.

And first, he thus reflects upon the first Argument we urge in Vindication of God's Justice.

First, it is said by some, that because sin is Infinite in respect of the Object against whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deserves an Infinite punishment. But this, I doubt, will upon examination be found to have more of subtlety than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the Dignity of the Person against whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault; For which reason all offences against God are certainly the greatest of all others. But that crimes should be hereby heighten'd to an Infinite degree can by no means be admitted, and that for this plain reason, because then the evil and demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal; for the demerit of no sin can be more than Infinite: And if the demerit of all sins be equal, there

can be no reason for the degrees of punishment in another World. But to deny that there are degrees of punishment there, is not only contrary to reason, but to our Saviour's express assertion, that some shall be beaten with many stripes, and some with fewer, and that it shall be more tolerable for some in the day of Judgment than for others. Besides, that by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against God may be said to be Infinite because of it's Object, the least punishment that is inflicted by God may be said to be Infinite because of it's Author; and then all punishments from God as well as all sins against him would be equal, which is palpably absurd.

As to this last part of the Reflection, That by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against God may be said to be Infinite because of it's Object, the least punishment that is inflicted by God may be said to be Infinite because of it's Author: It may be answer'd by observing, that Punishment is not at all heighten'd or increas'd because inflicted by Almighty God; for temporary Pain, which God
inflicts

inflicts upon the body, is as well Finite, both in Degree and Duration, as if it were inflicted by a Finite Being; whereas Crimes, as this Author himself acknowledgeth, are aggravated according to the Dignity of the person against whom they are committed, and so *Sin* is heighten'd, because committed against God's Infinite Majesty, though *Punishment*, because inflicted by him, be not.

The Author of this Reflection therefore might as well have argued, that if sin committed against God be Infinite because of it's Object, therefore all creatures are Infinite because God is the Author of them; for this consequence is strictly the same, equally True and equally Pertinent.

When in this Argument Sin is styled Infinite because of it's Object, 'tis not urged or imagined, that every thing, which is, in any sense, related to Almighty God, is for that reason to be esteemed Infinite; but that, besides the nature of such a Relation, which is Common both to *Sin* and *Punishment*, there is in *Sin* a Peculiar property, which renders the guilt of it

it Infinite, namely, that it is an Offence and Affront to the Infinite Majesty of God. Since therefore this Reason of Sin's being styled Infinite is not Possibly applicable to *Punishment* inflicted by Almighty God, or to any thing whatsoever beside *Sin*, 'tis in vain to urge any thing as *by the same Reason*; 'tis therefore Impossible, that the case which this Author brings as Equivalent and *palpably absurd*, or that any other instance whatsoever should Really be Equivalent, and by consequence, that any such instance should prove any thing at all against the Argument.

As for the first and Principal part of this Reflection, though there be something in it of that Clear and Easy Thought and Expression which the Author of it was so Eminent for, yet 'tis all Groundless and Mistaken. The Argument sets forth, that Everlasting misery is the Just punishment of Sin; and here is a very formal poof produced, that there are Degrees in the demerit of Sin, and will be Degrees of Punishment in the World to come; from which 'tis insinuated, that
Sin

Sin cannot deserve Punishment in any sense *Infinite*, because *Infinite* does not admit of any Degrees. Now no body ever denied or doubted, that there are Degrees of demerit and will be Degrees of punishment in the World to come; but what is this to *Infinite Duration*, the only thing in question, and the only thing that this Reflection should have refer'd to? For the punishment of all Wicked men may be *Infinite in Duration*, and yet greater or less in *Quality or Degree*, more or less Sharp and Tormenting according to the Degrees of their Sins.

2^{ly}, The second Argument is thus represented and thus replied to; *It is said by others, that if Wicked men lived for ever in this world, they would sin for ever, and therefore they deserve to be punished for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reason enough in it to give satisfaction: For who can certainly tell, that if a man lived never so long, he would never repent and grow better?*

In answer to this, it seems sufficiently manifest, from the Principles of the Gospel, by which alone we are to be guided

ed and determined in this Matter, that no Man dies in a State of Impenitence, till he hath so far provoked Almighty God by his Sins, that the means of Grace are Justly and Finally withdrawn from him: And I think it may safely be affirmed, that those, from whom God's Grace is Finally withdrawn, would be for ever disobedient, if they should be suffer'd to live here for ever.

But 'tis further urged, that supposing this to be *True*, it is no *Reason* of God's inflicting Everlasting punishment, and that upon this account, *That the Justice of God does only punish the Sins which men have committed in this life, and not those which they might possibly have committed if they had lived longer.*

But here the Argument is Misapprehended, and the Reply very little or nothing to the purpose. For 'tis not supposed, that men will be punished for *those Sins which they might possibly have committed if they had lived longer.* If this were alledged, it must be with respect, not to the *Duration*, but the *Degrees* of punishment, which are without question

to be determined and inflicted proportionably to the measures of guilt: And therefore that any man should suffer the same *Degrees* of punishment, as if he had Actually committed all those Sins which he might Possibly have committed if he had lived longer, would be, according to our Notions of things, inconsistent with God's Justice. In this sense, and in this sense only, the observation is true, but does not at all affect the genuine purport and force of the Argument before us, which is grounded upon, and to be interpreted by, that Maxim of the *Schoolmen*, in this case, *Duratio poenae respondet durationi culpæ, non quidem ex parte Actûs, sed ex parte Maculæ.* The Duration of *Punishment* is proportionate to the Duration of *Sin*; where by *Sin* we are not to understand the *Act* of Sin, but the *Pollution* of it. And this is no Unintelligible nicety or senseless distinction, but the plain Truth, consonant to Reason and Scripture; from both which we know, that sin * *defiles a man*, that

* Mat. xv. 20.

thereby

thereby * *even the mind and Conscience is defiled.*

We cannot indeed so accurately and fully account for Spiritual pollution as we can for the objects of sense, because our notions of Spirit are less clear and perfect. But our knowledge of it is thus far certain, that the commission of sin withdraws our Affections from God, and fixeth them upon such things as are directly repugnant to his Purity and Holiness; that Habitual Sinners do with abhorrence avoid that which is Good and with delight adhere to that which is Evil. Now if this be the case, as doubtless it is, of all those who die in a state of sin; and if the means of Grace do terminate with this life; if there be no Repentance, no Conversion, no Regeneration beyond the grave, (as there is not the least colour of reason to believe or hope it) hence it necessarily follows, that all habitual Sinners will be for ever alienated from the love of God, everlastingly subject to an Abhorrence of Goodness, and everlast-

* Tit. i. 15,

ingly affected with such Tendencies and Propensions, Wishes and Desires as stand directly opposed to the Purity and Perfection of the Divine Nature.

If therefore the Enemies of God be the Just and Adequate objects of his Vengeance, 'tis hence manifest, that the everlasting Punishment of Wicked men is so far from being Unjust or Unequal, that it is the Proper and Necessary effect of God's Justice; because all men that die in a state of Impenitence will be for ever Unchangeably subject to the dominion of sin, for ever the Enemies of God. And this consideration alone seems abundantly sufficient to Reconcile the Justice of God with the Eternal punishment of Sinners: And yet this Difficulty is still further satisfied by the

Third Argument, which relates to God's *Goodness*: But this likewise is thus represented as Insufficient.

It is said, that God hath set before men everlasting Happiness and Misery, and the Sinner hath his choice. Here are two things said, which seem to bid fairly towards an answer, First, that the Reward
which

which God promiseth to our obedience is equal to the punishment which he threatens to our Disobedience. But yet this, I doubt, will not reach the business: Because though it be not contrary to Justice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of mere favour, yet it may be so to exceed in punishments. Secondly It is further said, that the Sinner in this case hath his choice. This, I confess, is enough to silence the Sinner, and to make him acknowledge that his Destruction is of himself; but yet for all that, it does not seem so clearly to satisfy the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

These reflections, though they appear very Smooth and Plausible, are of no force or consequence at all, being grounded upon nothing but a palpable Fallacy. For 'tis here taken for granted, that there is *Excess* in the Eternity of punishment, that there is a *Disproportion* between the Fault and the Punishment, which is the very thing to be proved; and not only so, but which is likewise so far from being true, that what is urged under the particular immediately foregoing seems

seems very fully to prove the contrary. For if, as is already shewn, all Impenitent Sinners will be Unchangeably and Eternally subject to the dominion of sin, and by necessary consequence Eternally the Enemies of God and Goodness; the Eternity of their punishment is so far from implying *Excess* or *Disproportion*, that it is undeniably proportionate to their Guilt; and so far as we are capable of Judging in this case, God Almighty must be wanting to his Justice, if their punishment should ever have an end.

These Reflections therefore, which are not only Precarious, but plainly False, cannot in the least Invalidate the Argument they are replied to: It is still the Perfection of Goodness in God, that he hath graciously vouchsafed us a power and opportunity of obtaining Unconceivable and Eternal Happiness; and if we cannot be prevail'd upon by Goodness it self, our destruction is intirely owing to our own folly, and does not at all interfere with that Infinite Goodness, the demonstrations of which we obstinately Despise and Reject.

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Having

Having thus endeavour'd to Refute what this great man hath Unhappily replied to the Arguments urged in vindication of God's Justice and Goodness; I shall proceed to his other opinions, which seem to be no less Absurd, no less Dangerous, though advanced under the character of *Considerations whereby he endeavours to clear this matter*, the doctrine of Eternal punishments. And

1st, It is proposed as very considerable, *that the measure of Penalties with respect to crimes is not only nor always to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of government; so that what proportion crimes and penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Law-giver.* And hence 'tis concluded, *that whatsoever the disproportion may be between Temporary sins and Eternal sufferings, Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.*

The *Disproportion* is here again taken for granted; but of that already.

That

That the Determination of punishments and their Proportion to crimes do bear respect to that *great end and design of government, securing the observation of wholsom and necessary Laws*, may very well be acknowledged: But that this *end of Government*, singly consider'd, altogether exclusive of Justice, so that *Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it*, should be fix'd as the Sole Reason and Foundation of Eternal Punishments, is by no means allowable; the Assertion is directly False and directly Destructive of that Faith, which 'tis brought to Establish. It is not possible that any man should, upon this principle, stedfastly believe the Eternity of punishment. For if there be no other Reason and Foundation of Eternal punishments beside the *ends and reasons of government*, then the only End and Reason of them will be finally outdated and absolutely Void, when this world shall be no more, when the Laws and the Government shall be abolished together; and there is no cause to expect, that the means will be applied, when the Only Reason of those means is

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ceased,

ceased, when the Only End of those means is already Accomplished.

According to this account therefore, by *Eternal punishments*, and by the *Threatnings* of that punishment we are strictly to understand the very same thing. For mere *Threatnings* would Influence us to the observation of Laws, and that as effectually, though the Evils denounced were never to be Executed, as if they will be really inflicted, upon our disobedience, and are foretold us in order to avoid them, which is the true state of the matter: Mere Threatnings, I say, would Influence our behaviour, and that equally in both cases; supposing the Reality of the evil denounced to be in both cases equally believed. Now whosoever hath Thought enough to perceive this, (and any man's Thoughts will mount much higher, when in pursuit of such discoveries as would infallibly rescue him from all Dread and Solitude, from all Interruption and Uneasiness amidst the utmost sinful enjoyments) whosoever can thus reflect and thus observe, that the *Actual execution* of Eternal punishment cannot

cannot secure the observation of Laws, because the obligation of Laws will cease, when all Humane governments and this state of things shall be dissolved, before the Time of Inflicting the torments Denounced; and that *Threatnings*, supposing a Belief of the evil denounced, do with equal prevalency move us to obedience whether the evil so denounced will really be the consequence of our Disobedience or not; and is, at the same time, perswaded, that this great end of government, *the observation of Laws*, is the Only Reason, the Only Foundation of Eternal punishment, will either intirely abandon all Apprehensions of it, or however, the Belief of it must sit very loose upon him.

But this account is no less False than Dangerous. And indeed every Reply, that adds new Force to an Objection instead of Satisfying and removing it, may, for that very reason, be justly suspected as a Groundless and False account; and the reasonableness of such a suspicion is in this particular plainly exemplified. For even in Humane Administrations, though

penalties do bear ever so plain and immediate a respect to the observation of Laws, yet they are always to be determined by Justice, or consistent with it. And much less should we dare to Imagine, that any punishment, especially that which is of greatest moment, that which is Eternal, should be apportion'd by Almighty God in such a manner, *that his Justice should not be concern'd in it.* No; the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments is the proper object of his Justice, and 'tis as manifest an Absurdity to affirm, that this Attribute should not be concern'd in determining the state of future misery, as that his Power and Wisdom should not be concern'd in the Creation of the world, or his Goodness and Mercy in the works of our Redemption.

And therefore, after all the stress that is laid upon *securing the observation of Laws*, the true state of the matter is nothing but this, which is obvious to every man who understands the first principles of Christianity, That God Almighty hath under the Gospel, positively determined a state
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of Endless misery for all that are disobedient, That this Revelation of his Will is of most excellent use to secure the observation of the Commandments, and that if this Revelation does not produce Obedience, the Punishment denounced will certainly follow; which is not denounced and Described in the Gospel only to fright us into Virtue and Goodness, but is strictly consistent with God's Justice and the proper Effect of it, and will therefore be certainly Executed; unless that should prove true, which this Eminent Author chiefly urgeth to Illustrate and Confirm his second Observation, namely this, *That after all, he that threatens hath still the power of Execution in his own hands; and he may without any Injury to the party threatned, remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: And because in so doing he is not worse, but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any Wrong or Injustice thereby done to him.*

Now 'tis readily granted, that *no body can complain of any Wrong or Injustice*

done to him, supposing an Abatement of punishments denounced, or a Total exemption from them; but the Conclusion drawn from this Principle is manifestly Trifling and False. For God's Justice is to be consider'd either with reference to the effects of it upon Us, or with respect to God himself, as it is, in it's utmost and Infinite perfection, an Attribute of the Divine Nature, and absolutely Inseparable from it. With respect to our selves there would be no Injustice in the utmost conceivable Abatement of Punishment, nor yet in an intire Impunity: For nothing is Unjust to us but what is Hurtful; and if so, then there can be no Injustice done to us, so long as we suffer no kind of Misery.

The Vanity therefore and Falseness of this Argument appear even in this, that it proves too much; for it does not with more force conclude against the certainty of *Eternal* punishments, than it does, that at the General Resurrection a General Indemnity shall be proclaimed, and all Mankind, without distinction, admitted to the Happiness of Heaven: And yet this

Author

Author himself hath laid down this Rule, which is a plain Truth and Universally acknowledged, *Justice indeed is concerned that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike.* And therefore 'tis not easy to Imagine how this Absurdity should presently follow, which he could not possibly have fallen into, if he had but thought of Justice, as he did immediately before, under it's second consideration, *viz.* as it relates to God himself, and is Inseparable from the Divine Nature. For according to our best notions, grounded upon both Reason and Scripture, 'tis altogether Inconsistent with God's Justice, that Impenitent Sinners should go unpunished: It is no more to be suppos'd, that Almighty God, who is * *Righteous in all his ways and Holy in all his Works*, can exempt Incorrigible, Final Impenitence from punishment, than that he can divest himself of Superiority over his creatures, or cease to have a Being. And that the *Eternal duration* of the punishment of the Wicked

* Psal. cxlv. 17.

is not only as strictly consistent with his Justice, but as proper an effect of it as any *Punishment* it self is, hath been already evinced; or however, the Arguments urged should, upon this account, be embraced as Convincing and Satisfactory, that they are confirmed by the express and repeated Revelations of God's Will and Purpose in this matter; unless the Assertion here laid down should be granted, That though God Almighty should not execute Everlasting punishments, as he hath threatned, yet this would be no violation of his *Truth and Faithfulness*, *any more than it is esteemed among men a piece of Falshood not to do what they have Threatned.*

This dangerous Insinuation may be answer'd by considering, that the threatnings of Men are very often built upon the violence of passion, and occasion'd by Ignorance and other Imperfections; whence it frequently comes to pass, that those punishments, which when threatned seem Reasonable, are afterwards found to be evidently Unreasonable and Unjust: And therefore, even upon this
supposi-

supposition, that the least Deviation from Truth, absolutely consider'd, is sinful, such threatnings ought not to be put in execution, because 'tis less sinful to Remit them than to Execute them. Whereas God Almighty does fully and distinctly know the Reason and Equity of the punishments he denounceth, even when he denounceth them; All his threatnings are determined by Omniscience, agreeably to his own Eternal and Unerring Wisdom and Justice.

Such then being the Disparity and Disproportion betwixt these two cases, we cannot measure the threatnings of God by the threatnings of Men.

But the Difficulty may be still further answer'd by observing, that it is notorious Falshood among Men not to inflict such punishments, absolutely threatned, as are not only Consistent with Justice, but necessarily Required by it. And these are the only threatnings of Men, which are, in the present question, to be compared with the threatnings of God, the Execution of which is above proved to be not

not only consistent with Justice, but the proper Effect of it.

It would therefore either be inconsistent with God's Infinitely perfect Veracity not to Execute the punishments in a Future state, which he hath threatned, or else Veracity is nothing but an empty Name; as indeed they would have it, who endeavour to prove, that God Almighty's Truth does extend it self only to matters of Justice and Goodness towards his creatures; that he is, by virtue of this Attribute, only concern'd to fulfil his Promises.

I shall not build my Answer to this upon the notions that we have of Veracity; but shall rather, as the more Certain and Safe method, resolve the whole matter into the account that God himself hath given us; For, I think, the Reasonings of these men may be effectually overthrown, and the Contrary clearly evinced from one or two texts of Holy Scripture.

When God had declared that the Kingdom of *Israel* should be rent from *Saul* as a punishment for his Disobedience

ence in the Battle against *Amalek*, *Samuel** thus reflects upon it, *The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent*, Evidently importing, that since God had Absolutely denounced this punishment, it would be a Violation of his Truth not to Execute it. And this is confirmed by God Almighty's exprefs Words in the case of those *Israelites*, of whom he sware that they should not enter into his rest. For though that passage (as *Canaan* was a type of Heaven) be not (as is suggested) a full proof, that Wicked men shall actually suffer Eternal misery; yet it does abundantly prove, that God Almighty's Veracity is directly concern'd in the Execution of Punishments threatned, as well as in Fulfilling what he Promiseth; which may appear from *Numb. xiv. 29, 30, 35. Your Carcasses shall fall in this Wilderness; and all that were numbred of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall*

* 1 Sam. xv. 29.

not come into the land, &c. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it; Where God Almighty himself does plainly enough teach us, that his Veracity is concern'd to Inflict the punishments which he hath absolutely threatned, that the Evil Denounced against the *Israelites* must be Infallibly Executed, because he had absolutely Denounced it.

As for the case of *Nineveh* here urged to shew, that if God Almighty should not Inflict the Eternal punishments which he hath threatned, it would be no violation of his Truth, 'tis altogether foreign to the business. For the threatning denounced against that City was Conditional and therefore Revocable; whereas the Threatnings of Future punishment are Absolute and Irreversible.

* *Jonah* was sent to threaten the *Ninevites* with destruction, because their wickedness was great and came up before the Lord; but before the time appointed for their destruction, they repented and † *turned from their evil way*, and upon

* *Jonah*, i. 2. † *iii.* 10.

this account *God repented of the Evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.* The Reason and Condition of the punishment were removed; and Therefore the Threatning did of course become void. The conclusion then to be drawn from the case of *Nineveh*, with respect to Future punishment is this, that if we Repent and forsake our sins as the *Ninevies* did, we shall escape Eternal punishment, as they did the Temporal destruction denounced against them. This is all that can be concluded from that Example, and I need not urge any thing further to shew, that this is nothing to the purpose. For God Almighty hath positively declared, that all Habitual Impenitent Sinners shall suffer Everlasting misery, and his Truth is as directly and strictly concern'd, that the punishments thus Threatn'd shall be executed, as that the Eternal rewards, which are Promised, shall be bestowed upon the Faithful and Obedient.

There are some other suggestions in the discourse that I have been examining, which likewise seem to give occasion of
Disbelief;

Disbelief; but they are coincident with the mistakes already represented, and may be answer'd from the considerations already laid down.

Having thus endeavour'd to prove and vindicate the Article in the Text, I shall conclude with two or three Inferences from this discourse. And

1st, 'Tis hence observable, that no man should entertain the less Honourable thoughts of Religion and the Holy Scriptures, because they admit of some Objections, so long as those objections can be satisfied, and the Truth made manifest, notwithstanding all that can be urged in opposition to it. For the very Best things may be excepted against, as the very Worst do admit of some Vindication. God Almighty does not Necessitate our Understandings to embrace the Truth, any more than he does Overrule our Wills by Irresistible grace. If there were no room left for Errour, where would be the Excellency of *abiding in the Truth*? And if there were no Possibility of Doubt or Disbelief, Faith would cease to be a Virtue.

2ly, We may hence observe with St. Paul, that *the Wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* When men set up their own Imperfect and corrupt thoughts in opposition to the revealed Will of God, the notions they are so fond of, as appearing to be highly Rational, are nothing but the effects of some wild Passion or worldly Interest: For nothing that is Really Wise and True can be opposed to the will and pleasure of him, who is Infinite in Wisdom and Truth. When we call in question the Certainty or Equity of what God hath positively declared, our Wisdom degenerates into Folly, and our Reason into Madness.

God indeed hath been graciously pleased so to contrive and dispose his dispensations, that the Reason and Equity of them are much more certain and clear, even to our Narrow capacities, than any thing that can be objected against them. And when notions are advanced to the Dishonour of God, and the Detriment of Religion, 'tis Indispensably incumbent upon us to oppose Right reason to the Corruptions of it, and vindicate the Di-

vine Dispensation: Otherwise 'tis not our business to search into the Reasons of God's proceedings; and much more Unwarrantable is it, much more Insolent and Impious to make our Reason the Judge of him who bestowed it upon us, whose * *Judgments are Unsearchable and his ways past finding out.* An unbelieving Pharisee questions, † *How can these things be?* and our Blessed Saviour replies, *Verily verily I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our Witness.* It is the Divine Testimony that we are to depend upon, and stedfastly acquiesce in. We find it recorded to the very great honour of the Bereans, ‡ *That they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.* It was the perfection of Sincerity and Piety in them, that they indulged no vain scruples, admitted of no vain Curiosity about the Reasons of the Divine Administration, but searched only *whether those things were so*, only en-

* Rom. xi. 33.

† Joh. iii. 9, 11.

‡ Acts. xvii. 11.

deavoured,

deavoured, by comparing one Scripture with another, to know what was Revealed, and what they found Reveal'd they firmly believed.

We should not dare to argue about the Equity of God's Reveal'd will, or the Certainty of what he hath declared shall be, but rest in a firm Belief, that whatsoever he hath determined is Unexceptionably Just and Equitable, because he hath determined it, and whatsoever he hath declared that he will do, shall unquestionably be performed, because he hath declared it. We may by our Reason examine, and satisfy our selves in the motives of Credibility, the evidence which God hath given, that the Holy Scriptures are his Word and Will; but all Scruples and Uncertainty, about the Reasonableness of what he hath thus Revealed, are Foolish and Unlawful, Impious and Destructive.

3^{ly}, and lastly, We may hence learn what are the proper Grounds of our obligation to conform our lives to the Gospel of Christ.

Doubtless after some time spent in Sincere and Industrious endeavours to correct and subdue our Inordinate and Impetuous passions and inclinations, the satisfactions of a Virtuous life do abundantly exceed the pleasures of Sin. But Arguments drawn from this consideration, though ever so artfully contrived and recommended, are of no great force with Habitual Sinners. The excellency of Virtue simply and absolutely consider'd, without any relation to God's commands, Conscience and a Future state, is commonly slighted and rejected by those, whose daily enjoyments and delights do, at least in their own opinion, contradict all the fine characters and descriptions of it. Under the Gospel we have no occasion for these empty and ineffectual Arguments, grounded upon the beauties of Virtue in this Absolute sense consider'd; and by the use of such Arguments alone, or perhaps by the frequent use of them, we should not a little derogate from the Honour of the Gospel; in which are reveal'd Principles unspeakably

ably more Excellent and Effectual, motives equal to the utmost of our Hopes and Fears, the Engaging expectation of Eternal Happiness, and the Dreadful apprehensions of Eternal Misery.

We now know Assuredly, that the time will come, when all Profane and Irreligious Wit, which is now caress'd with so much Approbation and Delight, will plainly prove the grossest and most wretched Folly. The time will come, when all the Pleasures of sinful enjoyment will be past and gone, and as if they had never been, upon all accounts but that they will be succeeded with Endless misery. The time will come, when all the Troubles and Difficulties of an Holy life shall be Rewarded, at God's right hand, with Joys abundantly surpassing all that we can now Describe or Imagine; with all the Happiness that we shall even then, when our Faculties are Refined and Improved, be capable either of Enjoying or Desiring. *To which Blessed and Glorious state God of his Infinite Mercy bring us all, by the Continu-*

*al Influence of his Holy Spirit upon us,
through the Merits and Intercession of Je-
sus Christ our Saviour; To whom be a-
scribed all Honour and Glory henceforth
and for Evermore, Amen.*

SERMON II.

S E R M O N II.

The Resurrection of the same Body.

MATTH. XXII. 31, 32.

*As touching the Resurrection of the dead,
have ye not read that which was spo-
ken unto you by God, saying, I am the
God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob? God is not
the God of the dead, but of the living.*

PRejudice is so strong a Bias upon
the Thoughts, that those, who
are swayed by it, do generally
become as Tenacious of a False opinion,
as of a True one. And that unhappy Turn,
which it gives to the Mind, does not on-
ly appear in matters of little moment,

but upon the most Important occasions too. For 'tis notorious, that some men, who have embraced Errours inconsistent with Happiness it self, have Immoveably adhered to them; though they did not want sufficient means of Conviction. And this is partly owing to Obstinacy in some, and to Arrogancy in others; but in all Chiefly to a Disingenuous fear of being exposed to Shame for Retracting those Principles, which 'tis their utmost Dishonour to Retain.

Though the *Resurrection* be a most Glorious privilege, and the Expectation of it the greatest Comfort in this life, because 'tis the foundation of our Complete felicity in that which is to come, and though Humane nature Abhorreth a Final dissolution, and every reflection upon it is beyond expression Disagreeable and Frightful; yet when the *Sadducees* have once taken upon them to Determine and Declare, *that there is no Resurrection*, they resolve to persist in their Infidelity, and Reject all evidence of that doctrine, which a due sense of their own Interest should have engaged them to Receive

ceive with Approbation and Joy. And since they were so Wedded to this mistake that they could not bear the thoughts of Discarding it, 'twas natural for them to contrive the best means they could of Depreciating the contrary Truth, which deserved their highest Esteem. They therefore proposed a Case to our *Saviour*, which, they thought, could never be resolved to their Disadvantage. But Vain were their hopes of producing a Good reason in defence of so Bad a cause. Their objection did only expose their own Ignorance, and give our *Blessed Lord* an occasion of displaying his Divine Knowledge. He taught them, from the Different circumstances of men in This and a Future State, that the Instance, which they urged, did neither Interfere with the *Resurrection*, nor any way Relate to it. And having so removed what they thought a great Difficulty, he pressed them, in the words of the *Text*, with an Argument in vindication of the *Article*, which they Denied, taken from the writings of *Moses*, which they Believed,

In

In treating of this Subject, I shall endeavour to evince the Certainty of the *Resurrection of the Body*, and that

I. FIRST, By a Direct proof of it, from *Holy Scripture*, and

II. SECONDLY, by the solution of some objections, that have been advanced against it.

I. UNDER the first head of discourse, wherein the *Resurrection of the Body* is to be proved from *Holy Scripture*, it will be Necessary in the first place fully to examine the Importance of the words in my *Text*, before they will pass for a satisfactory evidence of this Article; because they are attended with a Difficulty, which hath been thought Insuperable, and they have therefore been accounted for by such an Interpretation as does Invalidate our *Saviour's* Argument, and represent it as Insufficient to prove the *Resurrection of the Body*. 'Tis urged, that if this Reason of our *Saviour*, that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, did Directly prove the *Resurrecti-*

on of the Body, it would prove, that the Bodies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were raised to life again, at or before the time, when God spake unto Moses, and called himself their God; but this we do not believe: And therefore 'tis added, that we ought not to suppose, that it was the Intention of our Saviour Directly and Immediately to prove the Resurrection of the Body, but only a future state.

But there will be no occasion thus to give up our Saviour's Argument, if these two Observations concerning it be True,

First, That he did intend thereby to prove the Resurrection of the Body, and

Secondly, That supposing it to be such a Proof, it will not from this supposition follow, that the Bodies of these Holy men were raised to life again, at or before the time, when God declared himself to be their God.

The first Observation to be made good is, That our Blessed Saviour intended by this Argument to prove the Resurrection of the Body. And in opposition to this 'tis asserted, that ἀνάστασις, concerning which the Sadducees propose the question,

on, v. 28. and ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, which Christ undertakes to demonstrate, v. 31. do not peculiarly signify the Resurrection of the Body, but another life, besides and after this, a continuing or being kept alive by God, after departure out of this life: In vindication of which 'tis further alledged, that ἀνάστασις, according to the literal notion of the word, is the *Re-subsistence* of men, denoting as well the Immortality and continuance of the Soul in a state of separation, as the *Re-union* of the Body to it.

But this very Interpretation it self does Overthrow that Opinion, which 'tis brought to Defend. For *Re-subsistence* cannot signify the *Continuance* of a Being, though in a Different state from that, in which it did subsist before; but does properly denote that Subsistence, which is Restored after some Interruption or Intermision of it; and is therefore no way applicable to the separate state of the Soul, whose Subsistence hath never been Discontinued at all. To this it may be added, that ἀνάστασις, whether Absolutely taken, or in conjunction with

νεκρω, does not in any place of *Holy Scripture* peculiarly denote the Immortality of the Soul, but plainly signifies the *Resurrection of the Body* in all those *Texts*, where the sense of it is *Determinate*; and therefore there is no reason to doubt, that the same expressions do Imply the *Resurrection of the Body*, in all other *Texts*.

However, since Recourse hath been had to this last cautious Reserve, after some others, that a Future or another state is the true Importance of *ἀνάστασις*, unless in such *Texts*, where the Context restrains it to the Raising again of the Body; let it be the Decisive enquiry, whether in this passage the Context does so restrain that word. And we are told, that the Context here does not so restrain it, because the *Sadducees* did not deny the *Resurrection of the Body*; and therefore the only thing to be proved against them by our *Saviour*, was the Existence of the Soul in a Future state. But this opinion concerning the *Sadducees* may be refuted, even from the Concession of those who contend for it. For those Testimonies,

timonies, from which 'tis on all hands agreed, that the *Sadducees* denied a Future State, are at the same time a full evidence, that they denied the *Resurrection of the Body*. For to believe, that there is no Future state at all, does unquestionably suppose a Disbelief of the Soul's Future subsistence in the Body; and yet to believe that there is another life after this, does not Necessarily imply a Belief of the *Resurrection of the Body*. For though the Body be an Essential part of man, and therefore from the supposition of the Soul's existence in a Future state may be deduced Arguments concluding with great Probability, that the Body shall Rise again; yet 'tis plain, that this consequence is not Necessary. And, to say nothing of the *Heathens* in this particular, it is very well known, that several *Hereticks*, mention'd by *Epiphanius* and others did deny, that the Body shall be Raised, though they acknowledged the Immortality of the Soul. So that our *Saviour* had not sufficiently opposed the Infidelity of the *Sadducees*, if

he had not urged them with a Direct proof of the *Resurrection of the Body*.

And that this was the Drift of his Argument, may appear by the Account which St. *Luke* gives of it, *ch. xx. v. 35, 36.* where our *Saviour* tells the *Sadducees*, that *they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the Resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more.* In which words a plain Difference is assigned between the state of man in the *Resurrection*, and that state into which he is reduced by Death; whereas there would not be any such Difference, if the *Resurrection* here spoken of did signify only the existence of the Soul in a Future state. And therefore, since in these words, *neither can they die any more*, our *Saviour* manifestly supposeth, that those Beings, which are in the *Resurrection* to be made Immortal, have before been subject to Death, and since the Soul does not die; nothing can be understood by them but this, that when the Body and Soul, which have been separated by Death, shall in the *Resurrection* be Re-united, they shall never

never again be separated, but subsist in that Union for ever.

Several other reasons might be alledged, if this one did not make it abundantly clear, that the *Resurrection*, which our *Saviour* here treats of and proves, is the *Resurrection of the Body*.

The only thing then, which remains to be Illustrated, is, That supposing our *Blessed Saviour's* Argument to be a proof of the *Resurrection of the Body*, it will not from this supposition follow, that the Bodies of the Persons here spoken of were Raised to life again, at or before the time, when God declared himself to be their God. For the Confirmation of which it is observable, that the * Expressi-
on, from which our *Lord* argues, is not restrain'd to any thing Actually accomplished by *Almighty God*, at the time when he spake unto *Moses*. For the reading of the *Hebrew text* is not, as in our *English version*, *I am the God of Abraham*, but *I the God of Abraham*; And in the same manner is the *Greek text* read in † *St. Mark*. And granting

* Exod. iii. 6,

† ch. xii. v. 26,

that the word so omitted is to be Understood, as it is usually, in the like case, in other *Hebrew texts*; yet this is no reason of restraining *God Almighty's* Declaration to any thing that he had vouchsafed to the *Patriarchs* at the time, when he declared himself Their *God*: Which appears from the use of the same Expression in Parallel texts, as, *Isa. xli. 10.* where God thus speaks unto *Israel*, *Be not dismayed, for I thy God, or I am thy God*: And that he declares himself to be so, not in relation to Past, but Future favours, is evident from the Importance of this Declaration, by himself Immediately subjoyned; *I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* And so our *Blessed Saviour* interprets these words of *God Almighty*, concerning the three Persons in the *Text*, as an Assurance given by him, that he will Raise them from the dead.

Since then *Christ* did intend by this Argument directly to prove the *Resurrection of the Body*, and since the expression, upon which this Proof depends, is not re-

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strain'd to any thing Actually performed at the time, when *God* spake unto *Moses*; it hence appears, that by these words, in the Assumption of the Argument, *God is not the God of the dead*, nothing is meant but this, That *God Almighty* cannot Properly be called the *God* of those, who shall never be Restored to the Perfection of their Being, by the Re-union of Body and Soul: From which it is the Direct and Immediate consequence, that those Dead men, whose *God* he declares himself to be, shall be so Restored. And therefore the other part of the Assumption, that *God* is the *God of the living*, as it is here applied to the Deceased *Patriarchs*, does denote, that though their Souls be at present Separated from their Bodies, yet *God* hath not Finally abandon'd them to that state of Imperfection, but will certainly Restore them to their Entire nature, and by the conjunction of Body and Soul constitute them Living men. And upon this account, even those, who are Dead, are said to live unto *God*; for he is their *God*, as he is called *the God of the living*, in respect of that life, which
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he will hereafter vouchsafe unto them; and that with the same propriety of Speech, which *Christ* himself makes use of, when he says of himself, * *I am the Resurrection*; which cannot be understood of his having effected the Resurrection, when this was spoken, but must signify, that he would afterwards Raise the dead.

The Doctrine thus proved by our *Blessed Saviour*, may be confirmed by the concurrent Testimony of other *Texts*. St. *Paul* assures us, that our Bodies will be made Immortal; † *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens*; for it seems very plain from what follows, that by the *house not made with hands*, is meant the Immortal state of our Bodies: ‡ *In this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*; which cannot be understood of the Heavenly mansions, but of the Body. And this is still more

* Joh. xi. 25.

† 2 Cor. v. 1.

‡ 1. 2.

clear from a further observation made by the *Apostle*, * *not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, i. e.* according to the true sense of the *text*, given by † *St. Chrysostom*, not that we would be Deprived of our Bodies, but Clothed with them in their state of Immortality; for it is added, *that Mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

And though this passage be understood of those, who will be found alive, when *Christ* shall come to Judge the world; yet 'tis at the same time a very good Argument for the Resurrection of other mens Bodies from the Grave; because it is not to be imagined, that the Soul of one man should either remain without a Body, or be United to a Different Body from that, in which it lived before, when another shall subsist in the same Body render'd Immortal. However, we are not left under Uncertainty and Conjecture in this matter; for *St. Paul* hath assured us, that they ‡ *which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall*

* y. 4. † Homil. 10. in 2 Cor. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. y. 15.
y. 16. y. 17.

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*not prevent them which are asleep; but the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then they which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And the same Apostle affirms, that as certainly as Christ himself is risen, so certainly shall our Bodies be raised: * If we believe, that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

But these Testimonies may seem to prove no more than the *Resurrection* of the Just alone: And 'tis no wonder, that the same observation may be made upon many other Texts; because the *Resurrection* is so frequently proposed as a Benefit and an encouragement to Virtue and Piety. But God's Holy Spirit hath in several other places deliver'd this *Article* in more General terms, as 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether*

it be good or bad. The same *Apostle* declaring his Belief of this Article, in his defence of himself before *Felix*, calls it a
 * *Resurrection both of the Just and Unjust.* And our *Blessed Saviour* thus fully represents the Universality of the *Resurrection*;
 † *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation*; which words are so expressive of a Proper and General *Resurrection*, that it seems Impossible to evade the force of them; and yet, besides the misapplication of them to a Spiritual Resurrection from sin, another evasion hath been framed, which below will be taken notice of. Hence therefore I proceed to the other general Head of Discourse, *viz.*

II. SECONDLY, The Solution of some objections that have been formed against this *Article*: Which hath been by some

* Acts. xxiv. 15.

† John. v. 28, 29.

represented as Incredible, because they cannot account for such Difficulties as oppose themselves to it; whilst others have endeavour'd to cancel the Belief of it, in it's Proper sense, by this Suggestion, that the Re-union of the same Body to the Soul is not Necessary to constitute the same Man, and is no where taught in *Holy Scripture*.

First, 'tis urged, that though we can readily assent to *the Resurrection* of our *Saviour's* Body, which still remain'd Uncorrupted and Entire; yet it cannot be so easily conceived, that Our Bodies should be Restored, when they have for many ages lain dissolved in the dust of the earth; when they have gone through many changes; when they have been a prey to the Beasts of the field, and perhaps to other men. But if we do seriously consider the meaning of *Almighty* Power, and stedfastly believe it to be a Divine Attribute, all these Doubts must of necessity vanish. *God Almighty* can in an Infinite variety of instances Effect what our narrow capacities cannot Comprehend. *Why then should it be thought*

a thing Incredible, that God should raise the dead? It must be acknowledged, that he, who can make the Body out of nothing, can certainly collect it's scatter'd Particles, after all the changes they have gone through, and range them into their former order, and in conjunction with the Soul constitute them the same man. Whilst therefore our knowledge of God's Almighty Power convinceth us of the Possibility of the *Resurrection*, we ought firmly to believe the Certainty of it, because it is deliver'd in those *Scriptures* which are undeniably prov'd to be the Word of God. We are expressly taught, that it shall be, and plainly capable of apprehending that it may be: For Omnipotence is exclusive of all Difficulties, and admits of no Bounds but Contradiction; and That is no way chargeable upon this Article, notwithstanding the trivial Arguments brought to prove it, which have been so often and so fully answer'd, that I think it needless to mention them, and shall therefore go on to those objections, wherein it is suggested, That the Re-union of the same Body to
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the Soul is not Necessary to constitute the same Man, and is no where taught in *Holy Scripture*.

The Principal Abetter of this opinion hath informed us, * that we may be able without any difficulty to conceive the same person at the Resurrection, though in a Body not exactly in make or parts the same which he had here, the same consciousness going along with the Soul that inhabits it. But because he had taken notice, that † every one will always have a liberty to speak, as he pleaseth, and to apply what articulate sounds to what Ideas he thinks fit, and therefore those, who have not maturely weighed his curious remarks about *Affected Obscurity*, and all his other instructions concerning the *Abuse of words*, might be apt to Imagine, that by the same person, in a Body, at the Resurrection nothing less could be understood than the same Man; that he might prevent such an Unreasonable construction of his words he further observes, that ‡ the soul a-

* Mr. Locke's Ess. concerning Hum. Und. B. 2. ch. 27. Sect. 15. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

lone in the change of Bodies, would scarce to any one, but to him that makes the soul the Man, be enough to make the same Man, and that the Body too goes to the making the Man; no very large concession this, though it be the foundation of an answer to that opinion, which is now to be consider'd; and which to Common readers, might seem to be favour'd by the words above, if such a weighty observation had not been annex'd to them.

If therefore *the Body too goes to the making the Man*; then he who is the same Man in the *Resurrection*, that hath before lived upon earth, must consist of the same Soul and the same Body. For though *Consciousness do go along with the Soul*, and though the Identity of *Person* be supposed and Implied in the Identity of *Man*; yet 'tis peculiarly requisite to the Identity of Man, that the same Soul be united to the same Body, because to the Identity of every Compound Being an Union of the same Essential parts is required.

But

But this Author in his last Controversial Letter to a Learned *Bishop*, wherein he treats of this subject, hath observed, * *that it would be hard to determine, if that should be demanded, what greater Congruity the Soul hath, with any particles of matter, which were once vitally united to it, but are now so no longer; than it hath with particles of matter, which it was never united to.* But the Determination of this question will not be thought so extremely Difficult by any one, who is willing to be determin'd by the Common consent of Mankind, and by the *Holy Scriptures*.

Though Matter be in it self void of Sensation; yet when it is formed into a Humane Body and united to the Soul, it is not only endued with Sense, but becomes the Source of certain Propensions and Appetites, which are in *Scripture* represented as † *warring against the Law of the mind, and bringing men into Captivity to the law of sin.* And therefore we are said, *as with the mind to serve the*

* 3d. Letter to Bp. *Stillingsfleet*. p. 177. † Rom. vii. 23.

*law of God, so * with the Flesh to serve the law of sin.* And as sin is thus charged upon the Inordinate Appetites of the Body; so those Bodies, in which such Depraved Appetites are subdued and mortified, are called † *the Temples of the Holy Ghost.* And this appears to be a sufficient reason for concluding, that in the *Resurrection* the Soul will have a much greater Congruity with the Body, which it hath inhabited, than with that matter, to which it was never before vitally united; because it seems very agreeable to *God's* Infinite Justice, that those Bodies which have been enslaved by Sin, should be consigned to Misery; and that those, which have been conformed to the Laws of Right Reason, and the influence of *God's* Holy Spirit, should be made partakers of Happiness: Whereas other portions of Matter, which have not been united to the Soul, and therefore not endued with such Affections and Powers, as render'd them Capable of being Sharers in Virtue or Vice,

* *Y.* 25,

† 1 Cor. vi. 19.

cannot with any colour of reason be deem'd the Objects of Reward or Punishment.

But this Celebrated Master of Thought hath undertaken to shew, by an Argument which he thinks unanswerable, that the same Body, in which man lives here, is not Necessary to his Identity in the *Resurrection*. For, representing the Disparity between the Body of our *Saviour* when Raised, and the Bodies of other men to be Raised, and endeavouring to prove, that though our *Saviour* did rise with the same Body, it does not follow, that we shall do so too, he thus discourseth: His * *Body saw not corruption, and therefore to give him another Body new moulded, mixed with other particles of matter, which were not contain'd in it as it lay in the grave, whole and entire as it laid there, had been to destroy his Body, to frame him a new one without any need. But why with the remaining particles of a man's Body, long since dissolv'd and moulder'd into dust and atoms*

* 3d. Letter, p. 180, 181.

(whereof

(whereof possibly a great part may have undergone variety of changes, and entred into other concretions even in the Bodies of other men) other new particles of matter mixed with them, may not serve to make his Body again, as well as the mixture of new and different particles of matter with the old did in the compass of his life make his body, I think no reason can be given.

Now what is here said would be true, and no reason could be given against it, if by *his* body no more were meant than this, That whatsoever particles of matter should at the *Resurrection* be vitally united to a man's soul, might be said to constitute *his* body at that time; but this does not come up to the purpose of this passage, which is brought to prove, not only that new matter united to a man's soul may be said to be *his* body, at that time Absolutely, and without Reference to any other time, but that a Body thus made up of New matter may be *his* Body, so as in conjunction with the soul to constitute him the same man, that hath before existed in this state; for that is the only design of this passage,
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and this is the force of his Argument: The Body of the same man in this life does at Different times consist of Different matter, and therefore his Body at the *Resurrection* may be made up of Different matter from what it consisted of in this life; and yet he will be the same man that did exist in this State, as much as he is the same man in the several periods of this life, though the Substance of his Body be Different at one time, from what it is at another.

But this Argument will not only admit of an Answer, but may also be Retorted as a very good Argument to prove, that to the constitution of the same man in the *Resurrection*, the same Numerical Body, as well as the same Soul, is necessary; if it be true, as it is expressly affirmed by this Author, that * *the Identity of man consists in nothing but a Participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same Organized body.* From which this Argument may

* Eff. B. 2. ch. 27. §. 6.

be drawn: If New particles of matter, added to our Bodies, do become a part of us, solely by their *Participation of the same continued life*; it hence follows, that if the same man who lives here, shall rise from the dead, his Body in the Resurrection will not consist of any Matter, which did not become a part of it in this state, by a *Participation of the same continued life*. Indeed the Continuance of life is not, as 'tis represented, necessary to the Identity of man; for our *Blessed Saviour* was the same man, before his Death, and after his Resurrection. However, according to this Author's own account, a Body made up of New particles of Matter cannot consist with the Identity of man, unless that New matter hath partaken of the same continued life.

And this may be a good reason of rejecting other consequences urged, against the Identity of the Body at the Resurrection, from the change of particles in the Body here. Though the *Body at the Resurrection may not consist of all the particles of matter, that have ever been vital-*
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*ly united to a man's soul here, notwithstanding, as it is alledged, * that they, in succession, have all of them made up his Body; yet this is no way repugnant to the Identity of the Living and Raised body: For we are told, and very Justly too, that though the particles of the body be changed; yet it still continues the same Organized body, to which they are in succession vitally united. If it therefore continues the same Organized body, in that Removal of particles; then it will at the Resurrection be the same Body, though it may not consist of All the particles that have ever been vitally united to it; supposing that it be made up of that matter, which was a part of it in this life: And that supposition is already confirm'd, as well from the Principles of him who opposeth it, as from our Saviour's Testimony, that all that are in the graves shall bear his voice and shall come forth: From which the Learned Prelate having, in this Controversy, excellently reason'd, that these words can re-*

* 3d. Letter, p. 174.

late to no other substance, than what was united to the soul in this life, because a Different substance cannot be said to be in the graves, and to come out of them; his Adversary thus Fallaciously decries this cogent Argument, by charging an Absurdity upon it.

* This interpretation of our Saviour's words, *if it prove any thing, proves that the soul too is lodged in the grave, and raised out of it at the last day; because no other substance being raised but what bears his voice, and no other substance hearing his voice, but what being called comes out of the grave, and no other substance coming out of the grave, but what was in the grave, any one must conclude that the soul, unless it be in the grave, will make no part of the person that is raised, unless it can be made out, that a substance which was never in the grave may come out of it, or that the soul is no substance.* In answer to this plausible Fallacy 'tis sufficient to observe, that the Soul, having all along Existed in its Separation from

* 3d. Letter, p. 169.

the Body, cannot Strictly be said to be Raised; but still it is a Substance, and a *Part* of the person that is *Raised*, *bears his voice, and comes out of the grave*, though it be not that part which is so Raised. The *text* assures us, that the Body, That part of man which shall be Raised, will be the same that was united to his Soul here; because That alone can be said to be in the grave, and to come out of it. And this Truth is, with as little success, opposed by the same Author, in his Interpretation of St. Paul's discourse, about the seed sown, * *That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain*: From which, as he represents it, the Argument stands thus; † *If the Body that is put in the earth in sowing, is not that Body which shall be, then the Body that is put in the grave, is not that, i. e. the same, Body that shall be.*

But there is a very Different account of this passage, and a very satisfactory one, given by *Tertullian*; who observes, that

* 1 Co. xv. 37.

† 3d. Letter, p. 185.

in these words, * *that which thou sowest is not quicken'd except it die*, where the very same Individual grain is said to be Quicken'd which Dies, we are taught, that the very same Humane Body which Dies shall be Quicken'd in the Resurrection; so that the Context is to be Interpreted consistently with these words: And therefore he condemns that very Misapplication of the Text, which is now mention'd, as Foreign to the intention of the Example.

And indeed the Opposition between the Body *sown*, and that which *shall be*, is so stated, that it does not give us the least reason to suspect, that the Body which shall be Raised will not be the Same that Dies: *Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain*: where the Body that *shall be*, is not opposed to that which is *sown*, consider'd Absolutely, but in this respect, that it is sown *Bare grain*, whereas it does not spring up *Bare grain*, but Improv'd and Adorn'd. In like manner shall our Bodies be Raised

* Lib. de Resur. c. 32.

again, not only restored to life, but with the addition of New and Noble Qualities, Incorruptibility and Immortality.

But 'tis observable, that though St. Paul's design in this Allusion was to point out the Different Qualities of the Dead and Raised body, yet his application of it is so expressed as to be a full proof, that the Same body shall rise.

* *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory:* 'Tis the very same thing, that is the subject of Different Qualities from what it had before. And this is still more evident from what is further asserted, This † *corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;* by which nothing can be understood, but that the Same body, which is Corruptible and Mortal now, shall hereafter be clothed with Incorruptibility and Immortality: And therefore the Apostle adds, that when this shall be done, ‡ *then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swal-*

* 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.
 ὡς τὸ σπέρμα τὸ τοῦτο.

† x. 53. τὸ φθαρτὸν τὸ τοῦτο.
 ‡ x. 54.

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lowed up in victory; not only upon this account, that it shall afterwards make no fresh conquests, but, as * *Ireneus* observes from the text, then will Death be truly conquer'd, when that flesh which is holden of it, will be deliver'd from its Dominion, and Restored to life, which shall be Immortal.

And hence may be answer'd a notion, that is advanced, by the Author so often taken notice of, grounded upon a Criticism, which he lays great stress upon, and therefore mentions more than once, as a very considerable Discovery: For speaking of † this 15th. ch. of the 1st. Ep. to the Corinth. he observes, that *οἱ πάντες, οἱ* are the nominative cases to *ἐγείρονται, ζωοποιήσονται, ἐγερθήσονται*, all along, and not *σώματα*, Bodies, which one may with reason think would somewhere or other have been expressed, if all this had been said, to propose it as an Article of Faith, that the very same bodies shall be raised. The same manner of speaking the Spirit of God observes all through the

* Adv. Hæres. L. 5. c. 13. † 3d. Letter, p. 199.

new Testament, where 'tis said, raise the dead, quicken or make alive the dead, the resurrection of the dead.

This Critical observation is liable to two exceptions; first that 'tis False, and in the next place, that though it were True, it would be no reason of Doubting whether it be *an Article of Faith, that the very same bodies shall rise.* That this observation is False, the Author of it might easily have learned from that * *Chapter*, which he was considering; where he might have found ἐγείρεται thrice † refer'd to σῶμα, and once expressed with it, ‡ σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body, or, the Body is sown Natural, the Body is raised Spiritual.*

And though this observation, as to the other word, ζωοποιηθήσονται, be not Literally false; yet 'tis plainly so, as to the substance and intention of it: For St. Paul says of God Almighty, ζωοποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν; † *He shall also quicken*

* 1 Cor. xv. † 1. 42, 43. ‡ 1. 44. † Rom. viii. 11.

your mortal bodies; which words do unquestionably denote, that the same Body, which Dies, shall be Raised again. And this is confirm'd by the Assurance, which the same *Apostle* gives us, * that *Christ shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*; where there is no room left for doubt, that in the *Resurrection* the Bodies of Holy men (who are particularly here spoken of) shall be the Same which now they have, with this difference; that they will then be devided of all Infirmities and Imperfections, and render'd Glorious.

But supposing that the sentence, which is above so positively pronounced concerning the *Sacred Scriptures*, had happen'd to be True, it would not have added any Advantage at all to the cause, which this Author espouseth: For the *quickenings and raising of the Dead*, expressions which he so often refers to, must denote the quickening and raising

* Phil. iii. 21. ΜΕΤΑΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΖΕΙ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινότητος ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ γινώσκειν Αὐτοῦ σύμμορφον, &c.

of the *Dead Body*, since the *Soul*, which does not Die, cannot be said to be Quicken'd: And if there be a Resurrection of the *Dead Body*, it must be a Resurrection of the same Body, that was before united to the Soul; for that alone is the *Dead Body*, which hath before Lived and Died. I shall therefore conclude this Argument, with that Remarkable passage, *Rev. xx. 12, 13. I saw the dead, small and great stand before God; and the books were open'd: and another book was open'd, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell deliver'd up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to his works.*

Such then being the evidence of this Article, I shall in the last place draw some plain inferences from it, in relation to Holiness of life; which should be the Ultimate end of all Controversy, and Disquisition in Religion. And.

I First,

I. *First*, Since the *Resurrection* is so clearly Revealed, we should not only yield a firm Assent to it, but frequently entertain our minds with the Circumstances and End of it, as most probable means of applying the Belief of it, with success, to our Affections and Practice. Some men are so very fond of their own gay and sprightly Imaginations, that they Disdain this Prospect, as too Gloomy, and Dismal to deserve their notice. And others do reject these Considerations as too Plain, and Common, and unworthy of their Thoughts, which they suppose to be raised above the ordinary level, and fit to be employ'd in more Sublime and Refined speculations. So do they please themselves with these Reflections, as Wise and Commendable, which are only an argument of Weakness and Folly, and do redound to their Disgrace, as well as Disadvantage. For things Indifferent should not exclude the *one thing needful*: That, which does most nearly concern us, ought in all reason to be the subject of our frequent Meditations. And the more apt such Medi-
tations

tations are to make Beneficial Impressions upon us, the more strictly are we obliged to the Exercise of them.

The Circumstances of the *Resurrection* do not want to be recommended by the Ornaments of Eloquence; but are in themselves such, that, if they are but Attended to, they will so effectually strike upon the mind, as to add very much to that Influence, which the Belief of this Article should have upon us. It seems scarce possible, that we should not be strongly Affected with the serious thoughts of that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, when we shall see Him, who * *took upon him the form of a servant*, that he might Redeem us, † *coming in the clouds, with power and great glory*; when we shall see Him, who was treated with the utmost scorn and ignominy by men upon earth, Attended and Honoured by all the Angels of Heaven; when every particular person, by the Divine power Raised from the dead, will distinctly hear the sound of the *last*

* Philip. ii. 7.

† Matt. xxiv. 30.

trumpet,

trumpet, some Signal voice, summoning all Mankind, from the uttermost parts of the earth, to the place of Judgment.

Thus in the *Holy Scriptures*, is that Wonderful Scene propos'd to our Meditations, which will one day be presented to our View. And whosoever is so Profligate, or so Thoughtless, that he does either Explode, or Neglect the consideration of what God hath thus graciously Reveal'd, for our Advantage, concerning the Circumstances of the *Resurrection*, may justly dread the Consequence of it.

II. *Secondly* therefore, and more particularly; A stedfast Belief of this Article should be the foundation of great Fear and Terrour in Habitual sinners. *God Almighty*, who gives Being to all things, Capable of happiness, to the end that they may be happy, according to their several Capacities, will Raise Wicked men at the last day, with a Design to make them Miserable. And how Severe must Their torments be, who have so highly provoked *God*, Infinite in Goodness, that
he

he will Restore them to life for this very purpose, that he may Torment them.

Men of the worst lives are sometimes so Vain, as well as Impatient under Afflictions, that they do freely wish for Death; as if That would Skreen them from the Vengeance of *God*, which will but Expose them to it, or, That put a Period to their Sorrows, which is but indeed the Beginning of them. They must not hope for shelter or security from the Grave; which is no more than the Prison, where they will be confined for a time, and then brought out to Condemnation and Punishment. And in the state of Separation, their Souls will be tortured with excessive Misery, and particularly, with the Fearful expectation of that time, when they shall again, with the utmost Reluctancy and Aversion, be united to their Bodies; that their Sufferings, not yet Complete, though already Intolerable, may be made Equal to those sins, which the fear of suffering could not prevent.

Fear is indeed an Uneasy passion; but that Uneasiness should be readily Embraced

braced and Indulged, when the Fear of misery is the means of Avoiding it. And though this be not so Generous and Excellent a principle of obedience, as the Love of God; yet our *Blessed Saviour* and *St. Paul* have proposed it, as an Engaging motive. And wheresoever Reformation of life is One effect of it, the Love of God will certainly be Another. Thus may a due apprehension of Danger become the cause of Safety, Fear be turn'd into Hope, and Sorrow into Joy.

III. *Thirdly*, Those who are sincerely Religious should look forward to the *Resurrection*, as the fountain of Patience and Comfort under all Calamities, and of Resolution and Constancy under the most Difficult duties that Religion enjoins. For the Worst circumstances in the *Wilderness* will easily be dispensed with, if the *Promised land* is but kept in view. The Heaviest afflictions, that the Body sustains here, will appear Light when put into the Balance with its Future Glory. Self-denial will be less troublesome, when attended with certain

certain hopes of the Enjoyments that follow. And 'tis a sufficient encouragement to Mortification, that it is the means of being Raised to eternal Life. Those may very well be Indefatigable in all the duties of Religion, who are Refresh'd with a Constant and Lively sense of that place, where they shall not only *rest from their labours*, but receive the Inestimable Reward of them.

IV. *Fourthly* therefore and *Lastly*, Since we shall certainly be raised from Death, we should not propose to our selves happiness in this life, as the End of our obedience. Indeed in the *Old Testament*, wherein a Future state is but Obscurely reveal'd, Temporal blessings are very frequently propos'd, as an encouragement to the observance of God's Commands; but in the Gospel, wherein *Life and Immortality are brought to light*, they are very seldom mention'd, and are never to be the Principal motive to Religion; unless it can be Imagin'd, that our Hopes and Desires may Terminate in that, which we are forbid to Love. For thus

it

it is written: * *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;* and, † *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:* Which Texts are not to be understood of those things alone, which are in their own nature sinful; for 'tis unquestionably true, that the fixing our Affections, even upon such Present enjoyments as are in themselves Lawful, does Alienate us from the Love of God, and a Future state.

And after all, Temporal blessings, which have sometimes been with too much Earnestness and Artifice recommended, are frequently denied to the Best of men. And that Goodness must be Uncertain, which is not supported by the expectation of a Certain reward: That Religion cannot stand very long, which is built upon an Unstable foundation. But the strongest temptations will hardly Shake the virtue of those, whose Love and Hopes are devoted to

* Col. iii. 2.

† 1 John, ii. 15.

the Treasures, which will Infallibly be dispensed in that day of Retribution, when they shall be rescued from the Tyranny of Death, and appear Pure and Perfect *before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; when they shall Hear the Blessed sentence pronounced upon them, and See the first rays of Endless glory; when they shall *meet the Lord in the air*, and thence with Him and the Holy Angels ascend to the mansions of Heaven; where they shall reign for ever, without any danger of revolting to Sin, or relapsing from Bliss.

*Unto God Blessed for ever, Father,
Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Ho-
nour, Praise and Thanksgiving,
from generation to generation,
Amen.*

H S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

The Necessity and Measures,
the Excellency and Efficacy of Works of Charity Represented.

LUKE xvi. Ver. 9.

Make to your selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.

THE Rule here given by our Blessed Saviour, is grounded upon the Parable of the *Unjust Steward*; who, finding that he must be ~~put out~~ of his *Stewardship*, improved the short Season, which was still in his Hands, to the utmost Advantage. He had

had all along been as far removed from Consideration, as from Integrity: But when his Unfaithfulness was detected, and he plainly saw that the Abuse of his Privileges must be punished with the Loss of them; this surprising Turn puts him upon projecting some means or other, of sheltring himself from that Storm, which was ready to fall upon him.

Indeed, the Practices wherein he laid the Foundations of a Sanctuary for himself, were as Indirect and Unlawful, as those, whereby a Sanctuary became Necessary for him. His Injustice exposed him to Calamities, and he made that the Instrument of his Comfort too: He had defrauded his Lord, and was therefore to be abandon'd; and he combined with his Lord's Debtors in new Instances of Fraud, to prevent his own Ruin. His Injustice was inexcusable, and ought to be detested; but his Wisdom was Commendable and Exemplary: And 'tis that alone, which is Commended in the Parable,

A Man's Good Qualities, do justly challenge Esteem and Imitation, notwith-

standing that some other Qualities in him, may possibly be of a very different kind, and should affect us in a very different manner. And therefore our Blessed Saviour takes Occasion, from the Cautious and Prudent Measures, even of an *Unjust Steward*, to recommend that Prudence, which is exercised in making Provision for Futurity. And he brings down that General Scope of the Parable, to a single Point, in the Words of the Text; prescribing the Improvement of one particular Talent, here styled *The Mammon of Unrighteousness*.

The Word *Mammon* signifies Riches; and Wealth unjustly procur'd may, in the strictest Sense, be called *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*. But that our Saviour did fix this harsh Appellation in that strictest Sense of it, upon Riches in General, is not to be imagined. And yet there is good Reason to conclude, that he does here speak of Riches in General; which may be called *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, as in some other Respects, so particularly as that Expression may be Interpreted *False*, or *Deceitful Riches*.

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And this Interpretation is agreeable to the importance of the *Greek Word*, *Adulter*, which we here render *Unrighteousness*, and does in some other Places, signify *Falseness* or *Deceitfulness*. And this Acceptation of the Words may be confirmed, by comparing them with the like Expression at the 11th Verse, *the Unrighteous Mammon*; which, as it stands in opposition to *True Riches*, denotes that *Earthly Treasures* are not properly and truly to be esteem'd *Riches*: They do in this resemble the Possessors of them, that *they are Deceitful upon the Weights, they are altogether lightert han Vanity it self*. *Spiritual Blessings* are the only *True Riches*; which are therefore here opposed to *Temporal Possessions, the Unrighteous Mammon, or False and Deceitful Riches*.

Our Blessed Lord therefore requires his Disciples to devote their Riches unto good Works, in expectation of a Future Reward. The Expressions in the Text, are adapted to the Circumstances in the foregoing Parable. As the *Unjust Steward* did, by his management, secure himself of Friends and Future Reception; so our

Saviour suggests this Inducement to Works of Charity, that by the faithful Performance of them, we shall, in effect, make to our selves Friends, who, when we *fail*, when we are removed out of our Stewardship, out of this World by Death, will secure our Admission into a Future and Eternal State of Happiness.

Such is the Occasion, and such the Importance of the Words, which may supply us with matter of Meditation, under the three following Enquiries:

I. How far, and in what Respects, we are obliged to dispense our Wealth in Acts of Charity?

II. Upon what Accounts chiefly it is, that those Charitable Dispensations are to be esteemed so Excellent, as they are supposed to be in the Text?

III. In what Sense we are to understand that Efficacy, which here seems to be ascribed to them?

I. It

I. It should be inquired, How far, and in what respects, we are obliged to dispense our Wealth in Acts of Charity? And, in relation to the Special and Restrain'd Sense of this Expression, *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, 'tis to be observ'd, that there are Cases, wherein Alms-deeds would be not only Unnecessary, but Unlawful; because they would be attended with the Violation of Justice. Satisfaction must be made to those who are Injur'd, before Provision for those who are in Want. Riches procur'd by Theft or Fraud, Extortion or Oppression, do not properly render a Man capable of performing Acts of Charity, but lay him under a Necessity of making Restitution. But if the Persons Injured are not known, or if it does, by any other Necessary Obstacle and Impediment, become impossible to make Restitution, then should the Riches, which are Wrongfully engrossed, be Devoted to good Works: And yet such Works are rather to be esteemed Acts of Justice, than of Charity.

The same Measures should be taken when Circumstances are such, that Restitution is not necessary, notwithstanding that Opportunities of making it may easily be found. Such are the Circumstances of Persons corrupted by Bribery. For since every Bribe is at once a Voluntary Gift, and the Fruit of Injustice, the Sordid Giver hath forfeited all Rightful Claim to it, and therefore Equity does not require that it should be restored to him; and yet it cannot Lawfully be retained by the Polluted Hands of him who receives it, because he hath no *Propriety* in it, unless *Propriety* can be grounded upon *Injustice*: And therefore it should be appropriated to Works of Charity. And in General, all Unlawful Possessions should be intirely given up by Restitution, where that is *Possible* and *Necessary*; and where it is not, they should be disposed of in good Works, without excepting and reserving any the least Part of them; *for it is a Cursed thing.*

But it seldom becomes Necessary to give up all our Just Possessions, for the relief

relief of the Poor. Indeed we find, that amongst the First Christians the Rich did admit the Indigent to a Free and Illimited Participation of their Riches: The Bounty of the one was determined by no measure but the Wants of the other. For as * *they had all things Common*, which they possessed; so, when the *Possessors of Lands or Houses sold them*, † *Distribution was made unto every Man according as he had Need*. These were Eminent and Glorious Effects of Charity; but we do not find these Degrees of it Indispensably and Universally required.

Our Blessed Saviour indeed lays this Injunction upon the Ruler; ‡ *Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven*. This Person was without doubt under a Necessary Obligation to Obey this Command, which was Particularly given to Him; but it does not seem Obligatory upon those, to whom it is not Particularly given; unless the Obligation of it should arise from some Uncommon and

* Acts iv. 32. † Ver. 34, 35. ‡ Luke xviii. 22.

Extraordinary Occasion. For such Extraordinary Events may offer, in relation to the Christian Church, or to some particular Branches of it, as may introduce a Necessity, not only to *Sell all that we have*, but likewise * *to lay down our lives for the Brethren.*

But in ordinary occurrences, and according to the usual state of Things, the general Rules of Charity are, that every Man should give *Liberally* and *Cheerfully*, considering that when he hath made competent Provision for himself and Dependents, That which is *Superfluous* should be the Portion of the Poor. In order therefore to discharge our Obligations to Charity, 'tis needful to enquire, what is properly to be esteemed *Superfluous*? And under this enquiry, it may be of some use to reflect upon a Distinction frequently made by *Scholastick* Writers; who observe, that *Superfluity* does either relate purely to *Life* and *Subsistence*, or, to the particular *Circumstances* and *Stations* of Men in the World. Whatsoever is possessed

* 1 John iii. 16.

more than is Necessary to the preservation of Life, is called *Superfluous to Life*; And whatsoever is possessed more than is Necessary to support Mens Respective Characters and Stations, is styled *Superfluous to State, or Condition*. 'Tis obvious then, that those things, which are *Superfluous to a Man's Life*, are yet *Necessary to that Decency* which belongs to his *Station*. And therefore, if no Extraordinary Occasions should offer themselves, he is not obliged to dispense, in Acts of Charity, all that is *Superfluous unto Life*: For if this were, in all cases an indispensable Duty, that variety of Orders and Offices, which runs through Human Society, must sink; which would at once break up the very foundations of the Civil Constitution, and be likewise highly prejudicial to the State of Religion.

The Measures therefore of Common Charity would easily be fixed, if Men did but determine what is *Superfluous* to their several *Stations*. But, in the determination of this point, they are very apt to Disobey God, Deceive themselves,
 and

and Defraud the Poor. For if they will resolve, at any rate, and to the utmost of their *Power*, to Indulge, and Inrich, and Aggrandize themselves and their Families; 'tis then no wonder, that they will never acknowledge themselves possessed of any thing *Superfluous*. If Ambition, or Sensuality, or Covetousness be admitted into our enquiries, concerning what is *Necessary*, and what *Superfluous*, the Question will certainly be determined on the Uncharitable side. But if these fountains of *Prejudice* and of all Iniquity, do not derive their Impure Streams upon Mens Hearts; if they do impartially and Sincerely enquire into their Duty, it will easily and plainly appear, that their Temporal Blessings are generally more than equal to their own exigencies, to the proper Decency and Dignity of their Stations, to that suitable Provision, which they are obliged to make for their Families, and to that Provision likewise, which may be made, with regard to future Necessities.

Men may indeed raise excuses for themselves, without any ground or foundation

tion to support them. They may Imagine, or Alledge, that *the Fire of God* may possibly fall from Heaven, and consume One part of their Substance, whilst the *Chaldeans* may seize upon Another: They may urge the Reasonableness of arming themselves against All future Dangers, against All Unexpected Accidents: And if this way of arguing be allowable, then must they suffer the Poor to perish, because they themselves may Possibly fall into that number. But they should be extremely cautious of trifling with themselves in matters of this moment, and of running Perversely into such Fatal and Destructive Absurdities. *Necessaries* and *Superfluities* are not to be estimated by *Possibility*, but by *Probability*, and the common Course of things. When any one hath made such Provision, as will probably, and under the usual course of God's good Providence, answer the Necessities and Just Conveniencies of Himself and Dependents; the other shares of his Treasures are to be reached out unto those who want them. Not that works of Charity are to be neglected, whilst such

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Provision is Gathering, for 'tis not to be conceived, that a sincere Christian can, in a direct contradiction to *Christ's* command, be, in any period of Life, so engaged in *laying up treasures upon earth*, that he wholly neglects to *lay up treasures in heaven*. St. Paul gives this commandment to the *Corinthians*; * *Concerning the collection for the Saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.* Charitable Contributions were not only incumbent upon those, who were possessed of a Full, Fixed Estate, but upon all others likewise, whose support depended upon Success in their Employments. Every one must, from time to time, *lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him*; must Constantly devote unto good Works, as large a Proportion of his Increase, as will consist with the supply of his present Exigencies, and with the Probable expectation of making suitable Provision for

* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

the future support of himself and his Family. Mens *Necessities*, and by consequence, their *Abilities* to perform works of Charity, are not capable of being fixed, in General, by Mathematical and exact proportions, and therefore do admit only of moral Determination, according to Probability, and the Ordinary methods of Providence.

Let every one therefore compare his own Circumstances with the state of other Men, in his own rank: Let him attentively reflect, and duly depend, upon God's providential Dispensations: Let him throw off all reserves for Sensual Enjoyments: Let him abandon Covetousness and Ambition, and then proceed to determine, with the utmost Seriousness and Sincerity, considering that God plainly sees both his *Ability* and his *Will*: Let him thus Conscientiously and Faithfully determine, what proportion of his Riches is, in Reality, *Superfluous to his Station*; for whatsoever shall, upon Impartial Enquiry, appear to be so, is a Debt due to his Afflicted Brethren.

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God Almighty hath ranged Men in different Orders, that they may exercise the Virtues which their different States require. The Poor are to exercise their Patience and Resignation, their Hope and Affiance in God; and the Rich are to demonstrate their Charity to their Distressed Neighbour, by relieving him, and their Fidelity to God, by an Improvement of those Talents which were committed to Their charge for this very purpose, that they should be employed in Charitable Works, prudently proportion'd to their Wants and Deserts, who are the Objects of Charity. For 'tis a Pernicious Error, to imagine, that we are the Proper and Arbitrary Lords of our own Possessions, and that we may justly and safely dispose of them, according to our own Pleasure. This plausible mistake, so confidently urged, and the Practices so generally built upon it, may pass with Impunity and Approbation amongst Men; but the Holy Scriptures declare, and in the Day of Judgment we shall be effectually convinced, That God is the sole *Lord*, who hath
boO intrusted

intrusted us with Treasures, to be disposed of, not as our own humours direct, but according to his express direction and commandment, in supporting and comforting the Needy and Afflicted.

Those who are tenacious of their Superfluities, do prevent the course of God's Blessings through their proper Channels, frustrate the designs of Providence, and are at once Regardless of the Good of their Brethren, the Authority of God, and the Salvation of their own Souls. For 'tis Indispensably incumbent upon all * *them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation, against the time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life.* And this brings me to the Second Enquiry proposed.

II. Upon what accounts chiefly it is, that Charitable Works are to be esteem-

2 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

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ed so Excellent, as they are supposed to be in the Text?

'Tis to be taken for granted, that this enquiry does only extend it self to such Outward Works, as are built upon a true Inward Principle of Charity. And undoubtedly such Works cannot but appear attended with great Excellency, if it should only be observed, That whosoever performs them, does bear a part with those glorious Creatures, the Holy Angels, in the Execution of their high Office. For they are employed in Ministration to the Necessities and Infirmities of Men: And then do we most conspire with those excellent Beings, and make the nearest approaches to their Perfection, when we approve our selves, as Faithful Guardians to those, who are placed below us, in a dependence upon our Protection and Succour. And yet it is the Excellency and Glory, even of those Blessed Spirits, as well as of Charitable Men, That in these Beneficial Employments, they come up to the plainest resemblance of God Almighty himself, which

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which they are capable of, and that in respect of an Attribute, which, of all others, seems most apt to command our Esteem and Love, His Infinite *Goodness*.

Reflections upon his *Immensify*, *Infinite Power*, and *Justice*, may raise Wonder in us; but a Sense of Complacency, and Joy, and Exultation, does not run in with that Wonder, till our Thoughts are turned upon his *Goodness*; which supports every Being in it's proper State, and supplies all those, which are capable of being Happy, with Happiness proportion'd to the utmost of their Capacity. The perfection of the Divine Nature cannot be conceived, without this Glorious Attribute: And in those * Men is the Image of this Divine Excellency truly Conspicuous, who are Beneficial to the utmost of their Power; whose Goodness is diffusive of Support and Comfort, to as many Miserable objects, as they are capable of Comforting and Supporting.

* Οὐδὲν πολυλογῶν τῆς θείας γροθῆς, καὶ ὀνόματι τοῦ ἐλεήσαντος τὰς ἀγίας ἀνδρας τὸν θῆαι δύνανται πρὸς καταλημνύειν. — Εἰ μὴ περίπυσσα καὶ τοῦ μὴ πρὸς ἡγορία τοῦ ἐλεήσαντος τί ἄλλου καὶ οὐχὶ τοῦ οὐ πρὸς καταλημνύειν γινώσκων ὁ λόγος, οἷον καὶ μαρτυροῦναι τῶ τῆς θεότητος ἰδιότητι; Gregor. Nyss. de Beat. Orat. 5.

So Beautiful and Excellent are such fruits of Goodness, that whosoever reflects upon them, will plainly perceive their Excellency, from the Sentiments, which such a reflection does naturally raise up in his Mind. And every one will readily give in to this Observation, who does but consider our Saviour's account of the *man* * *who fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.* For the Different Characters of the Persons, who came that way, do supply us with such different Affections, that the motions of our own Thoughts do fully testify the Baseness and Deformity of *Uncharitableness*, and the great Worth and Excellency of *Charitable Works*. We cannot reflect on those two, who *passed by on the other side*, but we presently find our selves Discomposed and Uneasy, and moved with some kind of Indignation against them. But as soon as we have passed through these Disagreeable and Grating Characters, to

* Luke x. 30, &c.

the account of the Kind *Samaritan*, who so readily and chearfully relieved the Distressed; this different view determines us to an high Esteem of the Compassionate Person, and reduceth our Ruffled Minds, to a state of Serenity and Pleasure; as if such Actions were so Generous and Excellent, that they must of Necessity be Approved.

These observations might suffice for an Answer to the Question before us; but because the Goodness of Moral Actions does much depend upon the Principles, from which they flow, it may possibly be some Additional Satisfaction, under the present Enquiry, briefly to reflect upon the Excellency of some Qualities and Dispositions, which are the governing Principles in Charitable Minds, and to observe the Necessary and Peculiar relation and connection betwixt those Qualities and Charitable Works.

1st, The first of those Qualities is a stedfast *Faith*. The wise Man thus expresseth his Exhortation to Charity; * *Cast thy*

* Eccl. xi. 1.

bread upon the Waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Whosoever makes an Estimate of Things, by Outward appearance alone, and the *Wisdom of this world*, does as much charge Ill Management and Imprudence, upon those who *give their bread to the hungry*, as if they should * *cast it upon the waters*; from whence they cannot expect its Return. For, according to the pure Natural state of Things, there is little reason to expect, that Works of Charity will turn to account. It hath indeed sometimes happen'd, that a Benefit hath been returned by the very hands which Received it, with large Encrease, into the Benefactor's Bosom. But instances of this kind are not Numerous enough to satisfy the Cautious Children of *this world*; who are in *their generation wiser*, than to depend upon Improbabilities, when they have more Certain Advantages in view. They will Inviolably observe their Safe rules of action: *Sinners lend to sinners,*

* Παρουσία τισι δοξαι ἀπολλύουσι, ὡς αὖτε ἴδασθαι τὸ ἀέρι αἰθέρι, ἀλλ' οὐ—Greg. Thaumast, in Eccl. Metaph.

to receive as much again. 'Tis the peculiar Character of the Faithful Disciples of *Christ*, that they *do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.* It is a steadfast *Faith* alone, that can induce them to *cast their bread upon the waters*, even Then assuredly concluding, that they shall *find it after many days.* And as great degrees of Excellency may be justly attributed to such Actions, inasmuch as they are grounded upon such a Glorious Principle, as a Firm and Steddy *Faith*; so must that Excellency still appear greater, when 'tis consider'd, That the Perfection of *Faith* it self does so far depend upon Works of Charity, equal to Mens Circumstances, that without them 'tis Imperfect: Otherwise, it would be difficult to account for St. *Paul's* Description of the only Saving *Faith*; * *Faith which worketh by love*: Otherwise, it would be difficult to vindicate the same Apostle's Contempt even of True *Faith*, when separated from Charity; † *Though*

* *πιστις δι' ἀγάπης* ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΜΕΝΗ. Gal. v. 6.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing. And as in this respect, the Perfection of Faith depends upon the Fruits of Charity; so is it to be supposed and implied, that they are in the same Sense, a Crown of Perfection to the other Good Qualities, which preside in Charitable Men: Such is that prevalent Affection, which is in the next Place to be taken Notice of, namely,

2dly, A lively *Hope*. If there were no difference betwixt *Wishes* and *Hope*, *Uncharitable* Men also might lay Claim to this Affection: For *Balaam* himself, so inflav'd by a Narrow and Worldly Mind, that he *loved the Wages of Unrighteousness*, could yet wish *to Die the Death of the Righteous*. But *Hope* is not to be measured by faint and Fruitless Wishes, nor yet by mere Expectation. St. *John's* Decision of this matter, is full and plain: * *Every Man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.* And ut-

* 1 Joh. iii. 3.

terly inconsistent is this Character with the account which St. *Paul* gives of those, *whose end is destruction, who mind earthly things,* * Who are so far from that *Purity* and *Heavenly Disposition*, which *Hope* produceth, that their Hearts are Corrupted, and filled with the *Love of this World*. That alone is Genuine Hope, which takes off Mens Minds from *Things on the Earth*, and fixeth them *on Things above*; which gives us such an Eager and moving expectation of Eternal Bliss, prepared for Good Men, that we can easily Sacrifice our Temporal Enjoyments to so Glorious a Prospect; which renders us ever most Easy and Chearful, and Joyful in such a Disposal of our *Earthly Treasures*, as is most subservient to our *Future Glory*. This is the Exalted State of *Charitable Souls*; who are so sollicitous and so Delighted in exchanging the Good Things of this Life, for those of the next. So Rich is the Soil, where Works of Charity are produced: And because they cannot fall from their Excellency, or cease

* Phil. iii. 19.

to communicate Good, in all Relations, they do *Confirm* and *Improve* even Hope it self; for when they are duely performed, * *Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*: They are the Grounds of Perfect Hope, and Dependence on God's Favour.

3dly, The Third Embellishment and Recommendation of a Charitable Mind, is a *Grateful* Sense of God's *Goodness*, and *Munificence* towards us. Indeed all God's Perfections are Infinite, and therefore incapable of Addition or Augmentation. We must all make this Humble Acknowledgment in the Words of Holy *David*, † *My Goodness extendeth not to thee*; but we should testify our Sense of God's Favours, to the utmost of our Capacity, and therefore determine to extend our Goodness to the Saints that are in the Earth. *Gratitude*, that most Excellent and Amiable Quality, does always introduce Ardent Desires, and ear-

* 1 Joh. iii. 19.

† Psal. xvi. 2.

nest Endeavours, to make the best Returns of good Affections and good Offices. And though we cannot *be profitable unto God*; yet may Those, who are Created in his Image, be profited by us: And the Perfection of our Gratitude unto Him, does rise in proportion to our Charitable Beneficence unto them. And this suggests,

4thly, Another prevailing Principle in the Minds of Merciful Men, their *Love of God.the Son*, our Blessed Saviour, *JESUS CHRIST*; Who, since we cannot be Beneficial unto himself, hath left it in charge with us, to prove our Love of Him, by the Ministration of Relief to the Poor, whom he hath deputed in this respect, the Representatives of his Person, assuring * us, that all the Favours which we vouchsafe to them, shall be accepted and rewarded as done to † himself.

* Mat. xxv. 40. † ὁ γὰρ τῷ ἐμοὶ χαρὴν ἔχει, ἢ μὴ γινώσκῃς. ἐγὼ μὲν ἰσχύω τὴν ἰκνησίαν μαρτυροῦμαι. πρὸς τῷ δικῇ τῇ δικαστῇ δωροδοκῶν. ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς φιλοφρονεῖται πρὸς πάντας· ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς τῷ συγγνώμῃ τῷ ὕλῃ. Basil. Seleuc. Orat. 26.

When

When *Jonathan* was Dead, *David's* Affectionate Esteem of him was by no means abated or diminished, but moved him to this Enquiry; * *Is there yet any that is left of the House of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's Sake.* And when *Mephibosheth*, the Son of *Jonathan*, was found, *David* thus expresseth himself; † *Fear not, for I will surely shew thee Kindness, for Jonathan thy Father's sake, and will restore thee all the Land of Saul thy Father, and thou shalt eat Bread at my Table continually.* This Passage cannot but move us with a Sense of Honour for that Excellent Spirit, which was thus demonstrated, in *David's* Kind and Zealous Concern for the Remains of his Deceased Friend. But to bring this Intimation still nearer to the Case before us: When our Lord committed the Care of his Mother, the Blessed Virgin, to *St. John*; the Disciple testified his love of *Christ*, by his Readiness and Chearfulness in taking that Trust upon him: And who can conceive that *Fervour*

* 2 Sam. ix. 1.

† 1. 7.

of Affection towards our *Saviour*, which glowed in this Disciple's Breast, under the Faithful Execution of his Charge? And such Generous Sentiments do inflame the Hearts of those, who, for the sake of *Christ*, now Glorified in Heaven, do support and cherish his Distressed Members upon Earth.

And the Excellency of such Dispensations will still further appear, as in the relation which they bear to *Christ*, the Head of his Mystical Body, the Church, so likewise,

5thly and lastly, In that Immediate Relation which they bear to the *Love* of our *Afflicted Brethren* themselves, consider'd as Heirs of Eternal Happiness in Heaven; where there is an Universal Transporting Harmony of Affections and Desires, of mutual Endearments and Complacency. We shall there Eternally exercise an intire Love of *God*, and of the *Holy Angels*, and of all the Spirits of *Just Men* made perfect, Coheirs with us of those Blissful Mansions. And we are here upon Earth, to be train'd up into a Capacity

capacity of bearing a Part in that Everlasting State of Peace, and Love, and Benevolence. A *Selfish* Spirit is incapable of that State: He alone is qualified for it, whose Mind is here Cultivated with the *Love* of his Brethren, and that in such Advanc'd Degrees, that he does, with Pleasure, use the most effectual Means, within his Power of rescuing them from the Pressure of every Calamity. And whilst he contributes to their *Temporal* Happiness, he promotes his own *Spiritual* Perfection; for every Act of Love does enlarge the *Affection* it self, and carry it on to a still nearer Resemblance and Similitude of that *Heavenly* and *Consummate* Love, whereby Good Men will be for ever United to God, and to one another.

If any regard then is to be had to the Imitation and Resemblance of the Holy *Angels*, and of God himself, or to the Universal *Approbation* of Mankind; or, if there be any Worth in *Faith*, or *Hope*, or *Gratitude* to God, or the Sincere *Love* of *Christ*, and of our *Neighbour*: And if each of these Virtues does derive its own
Native

Native Excellency upon Works of Charity; and, if the Perfection of each of these Virtues does so far depend upon such Works, (proportion'd to Mens Abilities) that without them 'tis Imperfect; we may hence reasonably conclude, that such Works are very Excellent, and highly conducive to our Salvation. And this suggests the third Enquiry proposed:

III. In what Sense we are to understand that Efficacy, which seems to be ascribed, by our Saviour in the *Text*, unto Works of Charity? *That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* This Encouragement may look, as if Works of Charity were a full Title to Eternal Bliss; as if he, who goes out of the World, adorn'd with the Glory of Them, may Claim Heaven, as his Due, and must be admitted, without any regard had to his other Qualifications. But 'tis by no means to be concluded, that such Works are the Sole Means of Salvation, or, that they will be effectual to the Forgiveness and Acceptance of those, who persist in the known *Omissions* of other Duties required,

ed, or in the wilful *Commission* of any Sin. The whole Course of the Scriptures plainly evinceth the Necessity of Universal Sincere Obedience. The Indulgence therefore of any Vice, does obstruct the Efficacy of Charitable Works; and that Obstruction must be removed, before they can be effectual to Salvation: And yet this is no derogation from their Excellency. Even the Merits of *Christ* are not efficacious of Salvation to those, who continue in the Dominion of any Sin; and much less can it be effected by any Performances of our own. Nor should we entertain the less Honourable Thoughts of Charitable Works on this Account, That Universal Obedience is Indispensably required; as if That alone were sufficient, and therefore They should not be urg'd, as so highly conducive to Salvation. For 'tis to be remembred, that though we should break the Habits of all our Sins, yet if we should fail of performing Works of Charity, answerable to our Capacity, we should still fall short of Forgiveness and Eternal Life. Even when

when our Sins are abandon'd, * 'tis Charity that must advance us into the Number of the Righteous and Blessed.

But still 'tis to be consider'd, that such Works are not the *Proper and Meritorious Causes* of our Salvation; tho' they may seem to be so, from some Expressions, both in the Holy *Scriptures*, and in the Writings of the Primitive Fathers. But since the Holy *Scriptures* ought to be their own Interpreters, and that Sense of a few Expressions, which is repugnant to the whole Tenour of the Gospel, cannot be the True Sense of such Expressions; and since this Truth runs through the whole Gospel, That *Christ* is the only *Meritorious Cause* of Salvation, or, as St. Paul † expresseth it, that *Eternal Life is the Gift of God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*: It must needs be concluded, that every Expression, wherein Works of Charity seem to be represented as the Causes of Remission, does only denote, that through

* Dixi de iis quæ Vetantur. Dicam nunc breviter quæ Jubentur. Innocentiæ proxima est Misericordia. Illa enim malum non facit; hæc bonum operatur. Illa Inchoat justitiam; hæc Complet. *Lactant. Epit.*

† Rom. vi. 23.

the Merits of *Christ*, they recommend us to *God's* Favour. So likewise ought such Expressions, in the Primitive Fathers, to be interpreted agreeably to the Main Principles advanced by them. Thus, if St. *Irenæus* * represents Alms, as *Loosing*, or *Freeing* Men from former Sin, 'tis highly Reasonable to conclude, that he means only such a Redemption from Sin, as is Subordinate to, and Depends upon, the Redemption effected by the Merits of *Christ*; because he does elsewhere †, under great Plainness and Fulness of Expression, declare the Obedience and Sufferings of *Christ*, to be the Cause of our Redemption from Sin and Death. And it would be very unreasonable to imagine, that any of the other Catholick Writers, in the First and Purest Ages of Christianity, should mention the *Merit* of Charitable Works in such an Acceptation as would contradict the Fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel, and of their own Writings. This is a very Just and Useful

* ——— ea quæ possidentur, pauperibus divisa, Solutionem faciant præteritæ cupiditatis ——— *Adv. Hæres.* L. 4. c. 26.

† L. 3. c. 18, 20. L. 5. c. 1, 2, 14. & alibi passim.

Observation, which *Vossius* * produceth out of *Cassander*: " To *Merit* does in
 " Ecclesiastical Authors, commonly signify to *Attain*, or be *disposed* and *qualified* for Attaining. And this may
 " appear, amongst other Instances, from a Passage in *St. Cyprian*: For, when
 " *St. Paul* says, 1 *Tim.* i. *I obtained Mercy*, according to the Vulgar Translation;
 " *St. Cyprian* thus Translates that Expression, *I Merited* mercy. And
 " there are many other Places in Ecclesiastical Offices and Prayers, where this
 " Word is used in the same Sense. And this Observation may soften some, otherwise,
 " Harsh Expressions, and render them agreeable.

This Remark, concerning *St. Cyprian's* Words, may be still carried a little farther: For in the Place refer'd to, it does not only appear, that he hath actually Translated the *Apostle's* Words differently from the other Versions, and from the *Apostle's* meaning, which possibly might have been thought a Mistake; but 'tis

* *Theol. Theol. & Histor. Disp.* 4.

likewise evident, that He himself, by *Meriting* mercy, did not so much as Intend any thing more than the *Attainment* of mercy; for having observed, * that those who offend, out of *Simplicity*, or pure *Ignorance*, may be Forgiven, he immediately urgeth St. *Paul's* Words, as a Proof of that Observation. And therefore 'tis plain, that in his own Intention, to be *actually forgiven*, and to *merit forgiveness*, are here used as Terms of the same Signification.

After these Observations, and especially concerning St. *Cyprian*, who is so very full in expressing the Purifying Power, and (in his Sense of *Merit*) the *Merit* of Alms-deeds; it seems Rational to conclude, that the *Strict* acceptation of the Word *Merit*, when applied to Charitable Works, did not prevail in the Early Ages of the Church. But, though Works of Charity are not *Meritorious*, yet may we depend assuredly upon their Accep-

* *Ignosci enim potest simpliciter erranti, sicut de se ipso dicit Apostolus Paulus: Qui primò, inquit, fui blasphemus, & persecutor, & injuriosus; sed misericordiam merui quia ignorans feci. S. Cypr. Epist. ad Jubaianum.*

tance and Reward. For our hopes of their Acceptance is raised upon an immoveable Foundation, God's.* *Faithfulness* and *Truth*: Though they are not properly the *Causes* of Salvation; yet they are a Principal *Condition*, to which God's Promise hath annexed Eternal Life. And after all the Umbrage which St. *Cyprian* himself, in his many Warm expressions concerning Works of Mercy, seemingly gives to the *Merit* of them; 'tis manifest, that he did not imagine them to be Meritorious of a Reward, as of a Debt, in respect of God's *Justice*: For he fixeth the hopes of Charitable Men in the *Promise* † of God, as the Encouragement to their Duty. After these Necessary Cautions, the present Enquiry may easily

* Fidelis Dominus, qui se nobis debitorem fecit, non aliquid a nobis accipiendo sed tanta nobis promittendo.—
Promisit enim hominibus Divinitatem, mortalibus Immortalitatem, peccatoribus Justificationem, abjectis Glorificationem. Quicquid promisit, Indignis promisit, ut non quasi operibus merces promitteretur — S. Aug. in Psal. 109.

† — In miserationibus pauperum Deum cogitat. Operatur enim ideo quia credit, quia scit vera esse quæ Prædicta sunt verbis Dei, nec Scripturam Sanctam posse mentiri: arbores infructuosas, id est, Steriles homines excidi, & in ignem mitti, misericordes autem ad regnum vocari. S. Cypr. de Op. & Eleem.

be answer'd. For, though Charitable Works cannot reconcile Impenitent Sinners unto God, and though they are not, in any Case, the *Meritorious Causes* of Salvation, yet are they Necessary, and seem to be, in concurrence with Repentance, through the Merits of *Christ*, highly Conducive towards preventing the Imputation and Punishment of such Known Sins as are repented of; highly Conducive to the rendring God Gracious and Indulgent in excusing Sins of Weakness and Inadvertency; to the reducing us to a State of perfect Favour with God, and to advancement unto Eminent Degrees of Future Glory. And indeed, under the Limitations already assigned, we cannot easily rise too high in our Notions, concerning the Efficacy of Works of Mercy; which will be Regarded and Approved, in so peculiar a Manner, by our Blessed Lord, when he comes to Judge the World, that, in his account of the General Judgment, * he mentions Them *Alone*, as the Matter of that Last, De-

* Matt. xxv. 35. &c.

cisive Enquiry; as if the Process of that Great Day shall chiefly turn upon this one Particular.

Since then Charitable Works are so Necessary, so Excellent, and so Effectual to Salvation; Undoubtedly they cannot be neglected by any Sincere Christian; Especially, upon such Remarkable and Engaging occasions of Charity, as are now to be laid before you in the following Reports.

Here were read the several Reports of the present state of Christs, St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, Bridewell and Bethalem Hospitals: As also a true Account of the Work-house in Bishopsgate-Street.

These are Representations of Things, in their own nature so apt to Move, that, in passing through the several parts of them, I could not easily avoid reflecting, That the Kindly fire of Divine Love did now begin to spread in your Breasts; That you now begun to feel, what the Scripture means by *Bowels of mercies*; That your Charitable Purposes did every moment rise Higher, and that, in the Con-

clusion, they would be attended with no Difficulty, unless it were in determining, which of these Glorious Designs should have the Preference. For each of them does, with abundant reason, lay claim to your Kind wishes and Liberality.

If the Education of the Children, recommended to you, * be duely consider'd, it must meet with Encouragement, where-soever any Footsteps of Charity are to be found. For if this be a Cogent reason of succouring every Necessitous Person, That he bears the Image of *God*; How justly may They depend upon our best Affections and Assistance, who have not yet Defaced that Image, by the habits of Sin? Or, if we should make an Estimate of this branch of Charity, by its Consequences; it will appear to be of the utmost Importance: For your Favour, to these objects of it, adds Glory and Strength to your Countrey, contributes to the Honour of God and our holy Religion, secures the distressed Innocents themselves

* *Christ's Hospital.*

from fatal Ignorance and Pollutions, and supplies them with the means of Salvation; which may be hazarded and finally Lost, under the Want of those advantages, which you are capable of giving.

If we transfer our Thoughts from those, who are Enttring upon the Scene of Life, to others, * whose Exquisite torments have made Life to become a Burthen to them; we shall find new Demands upon our Charity, and those so Reasonable and Just, that Charity cannot reject them. If wounds and Diseases do ly so very Heavy, even upon all the Comforts, which the Largest Fortune can supply; How should we commiserate the Pains and Sicknefs of those, whose Groans and Sighs are their only Relief. Let our Imaginations then be filled with the hideous Cries, which cannot reach our Ears; Let us *mourn with them that mourn*, and freely reach out Consolation unto them; under the Thoughts of those shocking hours, which are hastening towards us,

* St. Bartholomew's, and St. Thomas's Hospitals.

the hours of Sickness and approach of Death, when our Whole stock of Comforts will be Wanted, and when this Work of Mercy will be our Principal support. Thus is this very Blessing annexed to this Duty: * *Blessed is he, that considereth the Poor, or the Sick; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen him, upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

There is still another prospect of Misery, † which cannot but command our most tender Regard. For who is Hardy enough to withhold his Compassion and Assistance from those, who are deprived of *Reason*; upon which depends even our Capacity of being Religious, or Happy? They who can behold these Ruins of Human Nature, without wishing and attempting its Reparation, must themselves be fallen from Humanity. And they are indeed no better affected to the common good of human Society, than to those miserable Persons, who are Gra-

* Psal. xli. 1, 3.

† Bethlem.

ciously removed from it, that, if Possible, they may be safely Restored to it again.

Lastly, If we cast our Eyes upon the Places appropriated to the Confinement and Employment of Vagrants and Vicious Persons; * Those likewise will be found proper Repositories of *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*. Imprisonment is as necessary an effect of Charity, in this case, as Redemption from it is in others. The *Jews* did wisely seclude their Lepers from the most publick Places of Concourse, to prevent the mischief of spreading Infection. And by how much Mens Souls are more Valuable than their Bodies; so much more Solicitous should we be to prevent the propagation of Vice than of Leprosie; which cannot possibly be effected, if those Profligate Persons, who are confined for their Enormities, were suffer'd to breath in the open Air. And yet, whilst you thus abandon them from common Conversation, you do not only provide for the Preservation of O-

* Bridewell, and the Work-House.

thers, but likewise for their own Deliverance. You prevent their running into the Occasions of Sin, and reduce them from Idleness, that Fruitful parent of Vice, to an Innocent and useful course of Life, to Consideration, and the means of Repentance. Since then *there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine Just persons, who need no repentance*; How acceptable unto God must that Charity be, whereby the most Desperate offenders are rescued from the very Jaws of Eternal Death?

These are Unexceptionable Objects of Charity; And the Hands, through which the Effects of Charity are transmitted to them, are likewise Unexceptionable. Here is no room for that Little, Trivial subterfuge of Uncharitable Men, which they are so frequently insinuating, as a Cover for their Narrow and Base Spirits, That Charitable Gifts are often misapplied. Here is a Sure foundation for their good works to rest upon; Let them bring in their fruits of Charity into these Treasuries; which are so managed, that they

they are not strain'd, even with the Suspicion of Embezzlement, or Misapplication.

Let it be frequently and seriously revolved in our minds, That when our Lord shall appear the Second time, *coming in the clouds of heaven*, and Summon every one of his Servants, to bring in the accounts of his Stewardship; we shall not only be charged with the utmost of our *Abilities* to do Good Works, but with all *Opportunities* of doing them. And Blessed will those Servants be, who have faithfully and cheerfully embraced all proper occasions of making to themselves *friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*; of converting even their *Earthly and Corruptible Treasures*, into an *inheritance Incorruptible and Undeiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in Heaven*, through the Merits and Mediation of *Jesus Christ* our Lord; *To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be all Honour and Glory, henceforth and for evermore.* Amen.

S E R M O N IV.

Before the Sons of the
Clergy.

I COR. XIII. 13.

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity,
these three; but the greatest of these is
charity.*

THIS Account of *Charity* was occasion'd by an Undue Estimate, which the *Corinthians* had made of their High Qualifications and Endowments. God had Blessed them with a Variety of *Extraordinary* Gifts; but so it happen'd, that, according to the common Frailties and Infirmities of Men, they Misapplied, or Overlook'd the Wise purposes of God, and, having too Little
i regard

regard to His honour, They had too Much to their Own.

That they might not therefore sink, from the Spirit of *Christ*, into a Spirit of *Envy* or *Vainglory*, or Intirely devote their Zeal to those *Eminent* Gifts, which were most apt to gain Admiration and Applause, the *Apostle* admonish'd them to measure their *Esteem* and *Desire* of every Spiritual Gift, by the Degrees and Measures of the *Benefits* arising from it. Accordingly he closeth his Account of *Spiritual Gifts* in the xiith Ch. with an Exhortation, that they would be Most *Zealous* of Those, which were most *Useful*, *Covet earnestly the best Gifts*; not so much Those, which are most Surprizing and Astonishing, and apt to Adorn Your Characters, as Those which are most Conducive to Spiritual Edification: And then it follows, *and yet shew I unto You a more excellent way*, the Great Endowment of *Charity*, which is more Excellent and Useful, than any Other Endowments or Qualifications, how Glorious soever they may appear amongst You, or how

Earnestly

Earnestly soever they may be Desired by You.

He proceeds therefore, in the following Ch. to shew *Particularly*, that *Charity* is Preferable to the *Extraordinary* Gifts of the Spirit: Which indeed are, in Themselves, neither *Effectual* to the attainment of Holiness and Eternal Life, because we find, that Those who have *Prophesied* and wrought *Miracles* in *Christ's* name, may Possibly be Workers of Iniquity, and therefore finally Condemned; nor yet *Necessary* to Salvation, because every Sincere Christian, though not endued with those *Extraordinary* Gifts, will certainly be Saved. And, that he might give the Disciples a Still Higher recommendation of this Divine Grace, and, at the same time, raise their Esteem of those other Graces, which are absolutely *Necessary* to Salvation, 'tis added, in the Words of the *Text*, *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

From which words I shall,

I. *First,*

I. *First*, Give some Account of these three *Graces*, consider'd Severally and Apart.

II. *Secondly*, I shall enquire, how far, and in what respects, it must be granted, that, notwithstanding the Necessity and Excellency of *Faith* and *Hope*, *Charity* is Preferable unto Both.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall conclude with some Application.

I. *First*, I shall give such a Short Account of these three *Graces*, consider'd Severally and Apart, as the Narrow compass of this Discourse will allow. And in representing the Necessity of Each, God's Preventing and Exciting Grace, as ever concurring with every man's Sincere endeavours, is all along to be Supposed and taken for granted. And,

i. *First*, In treating of *Faith*, which, consider'd as a *Grace*, denotes in General an Assent unto *Divine Truth*, grounded upon *Divine Testimony*, 'tis necessary to distinguish betwixt That Faith, which is the Duty of every Christian, and That, which is reckon'd amongst the *Extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit; whereby some

of the First Christians were qualified to cast out Devils, * and to work Miracles. And, notwithstanding that All Christians are not obliged to This kind of Faith, yet it was a Duty strictly Incumbent upon all those persons, to whom a *Promise* of Extraordinary power was given: And if they did not firmly depend upon such Extraordinary Abilities, so Ascertain'd unto them, *Diffidence* was as much *Unbelief* in Them, as an *Assurance* of working Miracles, would be *Presumption* in Others. To this purpose we read, that when our Blessed Saviour had cast out a Devil, and the Disciples came unto him *and said, why could not we cast him out?* Jesus said unto them, *because of your Unbelief.* † For he had given them *power and authority over all Devils, and to cure diseases.* And though in This instance they failed of success, through their Unbelief, yet in many Other instances we find their Miraculous *Faith* crowned with Effectual demonstrations

* Mat. xvii. 20. and Mark xvi. 17, 18.

† Matt. xvii. 20. Matt. x. 1. and Luke ix. 1.

of their Miraculous *Power*. Nor were the Supernatural effects of this Extraordinary Faith Peculiar to the *Apostles*, or to the Apostolick Age, but were extended into Succeeding * Times, whilst the Circumstances of Things required That Power, for the Support and Propagation of the Gospel.

'Tis scarce to be doubted, but that those Other persons, who did not receive an Immediate *Promise* from our Saviour, as the *Apostles* did, of a Power to cast out Devils and to work Miracles, and yet had such a Power Communicated to them, for ends and purposes agreeable to the Infinite Wisdom of God, were by the Spirit Blessed with an *Extraordinary Faith*, a Fiducial *Dependence* upon God, for such Supernatural abilities, as a Previous Disposition to the Exercise of them. But still,

* Vide Just. Mart. in Dial. cum Tryph. p. 247. Edit. Paris. — Irenæ. adv. Hæres. lib. ii. cap. 56, 57. & lib. v. cap. 6. collat. cum Euseb. Histor. Eccles. lib. v. cap. 7. — Theoph. Antioch. ad Autol. lib. ii. — Tertullian. ad Scap. & in Apologet. — Origen. Comm. ab Huet. Edit. Vol. ii. p. 328. & contra Cels. l. i. & iii. — Cyprian. ad Demetr. & de Vanit. Idol. — Lactant. Divin. Instit. lib. iv. c. 27. — Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. v. c. i. — S. Chrysoft. in Ps. ex. —

if they had not been so Influenc'd, the Want of such a *Faith* had been no more Culpable in them, than the Want of such a *Power*: For the One is a Miraculous gift of the Spirit, as well as the Other. 'Tis no more the *Duty* of a Christian, as such, to *Believe* that he can remove Mountains, than 'tis within the compass of his *Strength* to *Remove* them.

Extraordinary, or *Miraculous* Faith was, in some particular Circumstances, the Duty and the Ornament of some Particular Persons; but *the Common Faith* is the Necessary condition of *the Common Salvation*: If we do not stedfastly Believe the Truths revealed by the Gospel, we have no Right to the Blessings promised in it. For when our *Blessed Saviour* had given commission to his Apostles, to *preach the Gospel*, he presently Inculcated the indispensable Obligations of Faith, upon Those, to whom it should be Preached, * denouncing unavoidable Condemnation against *Unbelievers*. And St. Paul speaks plainly of those who *believe not*,

* Mark, xvi. 16.

* as doomed to certain Perdition. And thus the same Apostle testified, that *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, as well as *repentance towards God*, is requisite to the attainment of Eternal Life, *Acts* xx.

21. And Parallel to this Text is the Character given of the Saints, *Revel.* xiv.

12. *They that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus.* Those therefore who Imagine, that they are not Obligated to Believe the Mysteries revealed in the Gospel, do break through a Principal obligation: And whilst they are Deficient in the Duty of *Faith*, they labour under a Defect, which prevents the Perfection and Acceptance of every Other Duty.

Faith is the very Foundation † of Virtue in a *Christian*; and if This be wanting, his Best performances are as *an house built upon the Sand*. For 'tis unto *Faith* that *Virtue* must be *Added*, ‡ if it recommends us to the favour of God; and all Those who call themselves *Christians*,

* 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. and 2 Theff. ii. 12.

† Theophylac. in Ep. ad Heb. vi. 1. & S. Chrysof. Homil. ii. in Ep. ad Rom.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 5.

and yet content themselves with *Moral* virtues * alone, and those derived perhaps from no Higher principle, than what the Heathens acted by, must fall under the character given of the Heathens by the *Apostle*, that *professing themselves to be wise, they become fools*. When God hath Required our Belief, as the Ground of all our Duty, is it not extremely Absurd to conceive, either that we are Obedient unto Him, whilst we Disbelieve, or that He will be Gracious to us, whilst we Disobey him? 'Tis a strange Unhappiness of Judgment, to *Appropriate* the notion of Duty unto Virtuous Actions, and to think that Nothing is Criminal but Immorality. The Rules of Moral Virtue must be Highly esteem'd, and Inviolably observed in their utmost Perfection, even in That perfection, which the Gospel hath given them: But let not the Rule of *Virtue* derogate from the Rule of *Faith*; nor the Necessity of the One be presumed to supersede the Other. *Immorality* renders us Ob-

* Clemen. Alexandr. Strom. lib. i. p. 338. Edit. Oxon.

noxious to Divine Vengeance, but let us not forget, that *Infidelity* does So too: And the Event must be, in Both cases, the same, that if *thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee.* Heinous is the Sin of *Envy, Extortion, Wrath, Hatred, Reviling*; Heinous every Sin committed against our *Brethren*: But surely More Heinous must that Sin be, which is pointed directly against *God*, and is an Immediate violation of His honour. Let all Those consider this, who dare to Impugn the *Veracity* of God, and with-hold their Assent from what He hath Declared; * *for he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.*

Those who will not yield their Assent to any other Truth, but what they can, by the power of Reason†, form Full notions of, and entirely Account for, are Absolutely Destitute of Faith, and do not Believe at all; for the evidence of Faith is altogether Different from that evidence,

* 1 John. v. 10. † Vide S. Basil. M. adv. Eunom. lib. ii. vol. ii. pp. 64, 65. Edit. Paris. & Homil. in Ps. 115. vol. i. pp. 313, 314.

which ariseth from the Nature of Things: In One case we are convinced of a Truth, and yield our Assent to it, because the Nature and Reasons of That truth, are evident to our Apprehensions concerning it: In the Other, we are Persuaded of a Truth, not because our Apprehensions and manner of Thinking can entirely reach the *Nature* and *Reasons* of it, but because it is supported by a *Testimony*, which we can Depend on. Who-soever therefore wants This kind of Persuasion, is Void of Faith. And if it is not at all implied in Faith, as one of its Conditions, that we should Apprehend the *Nature*, and *Manner*, and *Reasons* of Things offer'd to our Belief, how comes the Want of such Apprehensions to be urged in Vindication of Unbelievers? It must be a very Perverse, or, a very Weak way of Reasoning, when we fail of any Duty, to conclude our selves Excusable, because we are under a certain Incapacity, wherein that Duty is not at all concerned.

Such Men as Generally indulge themselves a liberty of arguing at this rate,
in

in favour of their Infidelity, concerning Mysteries Revealed, do yet profess to believe the Existence of *God*, notwithstanding that His Nature and Attributes do exceed the Measure of their Apprehension, and are confessedly Unaccountable. Those mighty Advocates of Human Reason, in Opposition to Divine Faith, will not easily clear themselves of Inconsistency, whilst one and the same Plea, which Equally affects Two different cases, is vehemently Urged by them in one case, and entirely Disavowed in the Other. The want of clear Apprehensions, concerning the Nature of *Mysterious Truths*, can be no more an Impediment to the Belief of Those Truths, than the want of such Apprehensions, concerning *God*, is an Impediment to the Belief of a *God*. Let not Unbelievers therefore any longer Attempt to Shelter themselves under their Incapacity of *Apprehending*, and *Accounting for*, the Nature of Divine Truths proposed to them; for such an Apprehension is quite out of the Question, and Foreign to the purposes of Faith.

But

But, though the *Nature* and *Reasons* of the *Things to be believed* do not fall within our Compass of Apprehending, and Therefore 'tis not Demanded, or Expected, that we should Apprehend them; yet the *Reasons* and *Obligations* of *Belief* it self are Obvious, and Easy to be Understood. 'Tis implied in our *Natural* notions of *God's* Perfection, that he *cannot lye*; and 'tis evident unto *Natural Reason*, that Miracles and Prediction are an Abundant proof, that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of *God*: Infidelity therefore, in the Ultimate Resolution of it, is at once a Violation of *God's Honour*, and our own *Reason*. And hence it follows, that all those Unbelievers are under a Plain and Dangerous mistake, who attempt to Skreen themselves from Blame and Danger, under a notion, that they are not Capable of Believing; that all men cannot Think alike; and that 'tis no more in their Power, to be of one Judgment and Opinion, than of one Size and Complexion.

Thus do they Delude themselves, and confirm one another in the Delusion,
not

not considering, That God does as plainly Require the Submission of our *Understandings*, as of our *Wills* and *Affections*, to the Word of Truth: That 'tis not incumbent upon us, to determine the *Nature* of any Mystery; for then the State of it must needs rise Differently upon Several mens minds, from their Different and Imperfect ways of Thinking: That we are not to Debate, whether the Laws of *Faith* are Justly Assigned by God, and whether the Things which he Commands us to Believe are Proper for us to Believe; for whosoever takes upon him to do this, *Judgeth the Law, but if thou Judge the Law, thou art not a Doer of the Law, but a Judge*: That 'tis not our Business, to give in our *Opinions*, concerning the Objects of Faith, but our *Assent* unto them: That to declare it Inconsistent with our Faculties, to Believe, is, to offer unto the *All-seeing God*, a Groundless and Audacious Pretence: That *God*, who Revealed the Scriptures, *needed not, that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man*: That he who bestow'd our Faculties upon us, and

Knows

Knows their Capacity and Extent, hath Positively enjoin'd us to receive those Holy Scriptures, as His Own Infallible Word, and Stedfastly to Believe them, because they are so; and, That whosoever Refuseth to Believe, refuseth at his utmost Peril, even at the Peril of Everlasting Destruction.

When Natural Reason hath exerted its proper Power, in concurrence with God's Spirit, and answer'd its necessary Obligation of Embracing, and Depending on the Credibility of Scriptures, and by consequence the Truth of Every thing therein deliver'd; its Whole Office, with relation to Pure Assent, is Accomplished. If we fall Short of This, we do too Little; if we attempt More, we run beyond our Just Length. For it would not be Duty, but Presumption, to scruple any Particular Truth, because 'tis in its *Nature* Intricate and Abstruse, or to measure *God's* Infinite Knowledge, by the narrow Scantling of our Own. His Testimony is an Abundant reason of our Dependence; and a Firm dependence upon That Testimony is, not only *Needful*, but also
highly

highly *Commendable* on our Part. The *Belief* of Myſteries is the more Excellent, and Acceptable unto *God*, for this very reason, That although they do lie too deep for our Underſtandings to fathom, and we cannot fully Comprehend them; yet we do humbly, and Freely, and Readily, Check and Reſtrain our own moſt Towering Conceptions, and ſubmit them to the Infallible Spirit of *God*, * *Caſting down Imaginations*, † *and every high thing that exalteth it ſelf againſt the knowledge of God*, and bringing into Captivity every thought ‡ *to the Obedience of Chriſt*.

Whiſt we Aſſent to any thing, which we plainly ſee the *Nature* and *Reaſons* of, when it is Related; we do not Aſſent to it, out of Regard to the *Teſtimony* of him who Relates it, but ſhould be under the ſame conviction, if we had no good Opinion of his *Veracity*. When we Aſſent unto ſuch Particulars only, in the Scripture, as we can form *Full notions*

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

† ΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝ ΥΨΩΜΑ.

‡ ΝΟΗΜΑ.

of, and do carry their own *Reasons* so plainly along with them, that we should Depend upon the Truth of them, from our own *Reasonings* concerning them, though they had not been Established upon the foundation of *Divine Testimony*, we do not pay much Honour to God, by Assenting to them. But when the Scripture proposeth to us certain Doctrines, which, though they imply no *Contradiction*, and therefore are not *Impossible*, nor by Consequence *Incredible*, are yet so *Difficult* and *Mysterious*, that they are unaccountable by Us, and we can by no means raise *Adequate* conceptions of them; if we do firmly Believe such Truths as These, for This reason alone, that they are Deliver'd in the *Word of God*, we do then testify a profound Sense of *Honour* for God, submitting our Beloved Reason it self to His Testimony, and Relying Intirely upon Him, as the *Author of Truth*, out of pure Duty and Deference to Him, in Cases which we are absolutely Unable to resolve our selves.

But after all, neither the *Necessity*, nor the *Excellency* of any Single Duty
does

does Imply, that it is of it self Sufficient unto Salvation. If we do not intirely Assent to the Truth Revealed, we shall be found Inexcusable, in *the great and terrible day of the Lord*; and when we have fulfilled this Fundamental Duty, and do stedfastly *Believe* the Truth, if we do not, in all respects, *Obeys the Truth*, we shall be found Unfaithful and Inexcusable still. Though *Faith* Begins in the *Understanding*, it must not Finally Terminate there, but bring down its Influences to the *Will* and *Affections*, and cannot be Imagined to *have its perfect work in us, that we may be perfect and intire*, till we become *Holy in all manner of conversation*. And therefore those places of Scripture which ascribe our Salvation unto *Faith*, are to be understood of that Perfect and efficacious * *Faith*, which is Productive of a Holy Life: *For, as the body without the Spirit is Dead; † so faith without works is dead also*, and cannot be a Proper and Sure foundation of Christian *Hope*; which is

* *πιστις δι' ἡμετέρας* ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΜΕΝΗ. Gal. v. 6.

† James ii. 26.

2. The *Second Grace* to be consider'd, and which consists in a Just and Joyful Expectation of That Happiness, which God hath promised in the Holy Scripture. As the Object of our *Faith* is Supernatural *Truth*; so the Object of our *Hope* is Supernatural *Good*. The one is a firm Dependence upon the Certainty of God's Being, and of Things revealed; the Other, a firm Expectation of *Seeing him as he is*, and of enjoying all the Blessings he hath Promised. The One is our Duty; the Other our Encouragement and Inducement to it. And This also becomes a Duty, Consequentially, and upon Supposition of our Discharging the Other. For, as we are stedfastly to *Believe*, that God hath determin'd to Bestow the Blessings, which are Tender'd to us in the Scripture; so are we assuredly to *Expect* those Blessings, which He hath Determin'd to Bestow.

And as those Blessings are Different in their Greatness and Perfection; there is a suitable Difference in them, as they are the Objects of our *Hope*. The Blissful Enjoyment of God, in a Future State,

is

is the Higheſt and moſt Deſirable Bleſſing, and, Therefore the *Principal* Object of our *Hope*; which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of, *Rom. v. 2. By whom we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Thoſe *Directions* and *Aſſiſtances*, which are the Means of attaining Eternal Happineſs, though they be Divine Vouchſafements which we can never ſufficiently value, are yet Inferiour to that Happineſs it ſelf, and are therefore a *Secondary* object of our *Hope*. So we find the Apoſtle expreſſing his *Hope* of Divine Grace, whereby he might be enabled to Perſevere in his Duty, howſoever Difficult or Hazardous it might be; *Phil. i. 20.*

The *Principal* Hope of a Chriſtian, or, the firm Expectation of Everlaſting Felicity, is a *Conditional* Duty, and properly found in Thoſe alone, who ſincerely Obſerve the Divine Commands. And in ſuch perſons 'tis a Duty, as of Neceſſary Obligation, ſo likewise highly *Excellent* and *Acceptable* upon Two accounts; Firſt, becauſe 'tis an intire Reliance upon God's *Power*, *Goodneſs* and *Fidelity*, for Favours Future and Unſeen,

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and

and Those such, as are in pure Humane appearance scarce to be expected, and no otherwise to be Firmly Depended on, than from an Assurance of the *Power*, and *Goodness*, and *Faithfulness* of God. Thus those Full measures of *Hope*, which crowned *Abraham's Faith*, were in the most Signal manner Approved and Accepted: * *For against hope he believed in hope; And therefore it was Imputed to him for Righteousness.* And the Excellency of this Divine Grace is still Further Evident from the Blessed Influence, which it is Apt to have, in concurrence with the Operations of the Holy Spirt, upon mens Lives and Actions: † *For every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure;* Does not only consider the Necessity of mens leading Holy Lives, in order to Proper *Hope*, but is instigated and excited by it, to Fulfil the conditions of it; and is strengthen'd and supported ‡ by it under all

* Rom. iv. 18, 22.

† 1 John. iii. 3.

‡ St. Paul speaks of Hope as the Anchor of the Soul, and an Helmet. Accordingly St. Chrysostom, Expos. in Ps. ix. and his most Pious and Excellent Disciple, Isidor. Peleus. lib. ii.

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the Difficulties and Conflicts of the Christian Life.

But, though the Virtue be represented in General, as a *Conditional* Duty; yet that Limitation is to be looked upon, in a Different View, with regard to the Different Circumstances of Good and Bad men. For when those Conditions, which are the Ground of it, are Actually performed, as they are by all Sincere Christians, the Obligation of the Duty upon them becomes *Absolute*. But the relation, which it bears to Disobedient men, is purely *Conditional*; and it cannot be either Necessary, or Allowable in Them, to hope for Salvation, but upon Condition that they shall attain a State of Sincere Obedience, which they have not already attain'd. And yet even this *Conditional* and Distant Hope should, in all Reason, be very conducive to their Reformation; for what Reasonable man would not be very Strongly inclined to

ep. 17. have in most significant words expressed the Mighty Power of Hope, as rendring Men Steddy and Impregnable, under the most violent Assaults of Temptation. Vide etiam S. Chrysost. in Ps. xlv. & Homil. ad Pop. Antioch. 2.

Obedience, since his Obedience will lead him, first, into the Comfortable and Certain *Expectation* of Eternal Bliss, and afterwards into the *Enjoyment* of it.

The same thing is observable of *Hope*, in respect of its *Secondary* Object, the Influences of the *Holy Spirit*, enabling men to *work out their Salvation*. For though the Constant Aids of the Spirit are not otherwise to be Hoped for, than upon Condition, that they be duly Applied and Used; yet every Faithful Servant of God, having already Answer'd that condition, may, under his *Present* State, depend *Absolutely* upon them: And such a Dependence is in him a Necessary Duty. But the Hope of such measures of Grace, as are Sufficient to the Accomplishment of the Spiritual Life, can no otherwise appertain to an Impenitent Sinner, who hath all along Resisted the Holy Spirit, than in a way strictly *Conditional*: He cannot Justly take up a Firm Expectation of such Full and Effectual measures of Grace, without Supposing himself to become Sincere and Faithful in a Future Use and Improvement

ment of those means, which he hath hitherto Neglected and Abused. And even This Hope, Remote as it is, must needs be a Weighty and Forcible Inducement to Repentance and a Holy Life: For what man, in his Sound mind, would not sincerely endeavour to become Holy and Happy, when the *Sincerity* of his Endeavours is the Only thing required, on His Part, in order to the *Sufficiency* and *Success* of them?

Those who are *Faithful* in the Use of their Talents, the Abilities which God gives them, whatever those Abilities are, may Justly Hope, that the Holy Spirit will Abundantly support them under all the Difficulties of Duty: But whilst that *Fidelity* is wanting, an *Absolute* and Firm Expectation of Effectual aids from the Spirit, is not *Hope*, but *Presumption*, as properly, as the charge of Presumption falls upon Those also, who flatter themselves with the Hopes of *Heaven*, whilst they are under the Dominion of Sin. They may possibly *Desire* Happiness; but *Hope* implies Just *Expectation*, as well as *Desire*; and That is Peculiar to the Sin-

care and Obedient Servants of God. And in Persons Thus qualified for *Hope*, the Want of it, so far as it relates to the Mind, and is not Occasion'd by any Indisposition in the Body, is owing to the Want of Just thoughts concerning God, and involves men in the Sin of *Despair*.

But there is perhaps Less occasion of enlarging upon the Necessity of *Hope*, than of some Other virtues, because men are Usually more apt to *Exceed*, than to be *Defective* in it. Some few Phlegmatick tempers there are, where *Hope* does not easily find Admission: But Generally mens Dispositions are of the Sanguine kind, and Apt to carry their Expectations, at least as Far as they should go. We are Commonly as Little moved by those Arguments, which are offer'd for a Proper *Restraint* of *Hope*, as by those which are urged for the proper *Extent* of *Charity*; which is,

3. *The Third Christian Grace* to be consider'd, and which must needs be thought very *Extensive*, since this *One* word includes the *Two great Commandments*,

ments, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. For *Charity* denotes the Love of *God*, and of our *Neighbours* also, for His sake, and, so far as our Love of *Them* is groundd upon, and Consistent with the Love of *Him*. And the Scripture represents *Both* these branches of Love, under such Terms of Warmth and Intenfeness, that Cold and Languid affections do scarce bear the least Resemblance of *Either*.

We are Commanded to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength*; Which Implies, That we should very frequently Contemplate the High Perfections, which are in *God*, in order to Raife and Preserve the Higheft Admiration of them within our Selves: That this Admiration should not affect our *Understandings* alone, but descend upon our *Hearts*, and move Full Complacency There: That we should be Exceedingly Delighted with the Thoughts of him, who hath given us our very Power of Thinking: That we should above all things rejoyce in the sole Author of all our Joys: That his Gracious

Forbearance and Loving Kindness towards Us, after all our Trespases and Provocations, should Endear us to the Utmost, and draw our Warmest Affections toward Him: That our Love of Him, whose Goodness to us is Boundless, should rise to the Highest, and admit of no Bounds but its own Incapacity of rising Higher: That the Enjoyment of Him, in whose *Pleasure is Life*, should fill up the measure of our Wishes and Desires, and that every Other Enjoyment, which stands in Opposition to it, or Competition with it, should at once be Neglected and Disdain'd: That our Love of God should be so Delightful to us, as to render us earnestly Desirous of Loving him still more, and Earnest in Praying, that we may be filled with *the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us*; and, That we should prove the Sincerity and Fervency of our *Love*, by the Sincerity and Constancy of our *Obedience*: *For this is the love of God*, the Proper and Necessary Evidence and Effect of Divine love, *that we keep his Commandments,*
and

and Particularly, the *New Commandment*, as it is styled by our Saviour, wherein the *second Branch of Charity* is enjoyned; for *this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.*

And under This are contained all the Other commandments, which concern our Regards and Behaviour to One another. For so the *Apostle* expressly declares, and on this account adds, * that *love is the fulfilling of the law*, that is, if *Love* it self be Fulfilled and Perfect; for then 'tis the Model, upon which all our Duties to our Brethren are Formed and Finished. But if This be either totally Wanting, or Confined and Imperfect, then the very Fountain fails, from whence all our Sentiments and Dispositions, as well as Actions, relating to our Brethren should be Derived, and Diffused through the Whole course of our Conduct towards them.

The Necessary and Indissoluble Connexion betwixt our Goodwill and our

* Rom. xiii. 9, 10.

Good Works, betwixt the entire *Love* of our neighbour and proper Acts of *Bene-
ficence* towards him, is in many Other places of Scripture fully represented, and hath been very often, and very Accurately treated of, upon this Occasion. But the *Apostle's* Design in this place, is, not so much to enforce the *Necessity* of Good Works, as to lay the proper *Foundation*, upon which they should be built. *Though I bestow all my Goods to feed the poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing, &c. 3.* Charity, as the *Principle* of all our Thoughts and Deportment, is what he is labouring to Fix and Establish. All our Behaviour towards our Brethren, be it ever so Specious in it Self, or ever so Beneficial unto Them, will be to our Selves Unprofitable, if it does not proceed from an Inward Principle of Charity. It should therefore be our Chief Care and Study, to attain and keep up Charitable Thoughts of our Neighbour, and Charitable Affections towards him. And yet it cannot be denied, that men may possibly be found in such Circumstances, that a perfect *Good Opinion* of them

them can neither be Required by the Law of Charity, nor Consistent with it.

Indeed a Mutual Good Opinion amongst men is so Agreeable, and Lovely, and Desirable, and, in Most cases so Necessary, that we should be exceeding Cautious of failing in it, or Diminution of it; that we should be to the Utmost Careful of Preserving and Defending it, as long as ever there is the least Foundation for it to stand on, and, that we should be heartily Grieved and Afflicted, when, in any Instance, it must of *Necessity* be excluded.

Many other branches of Charity are Necessary duties, even towards the Worst of men, whether in respect of *Faith* or *Manners*. We are Indispensably bound, most Sincerely and Affectionately to Commiserate their Condition; to weep and mourn for the manifest Danger they are in, though they Themselves are not sensible of it; to offer up our most Ardent prayers to God, for their Conversion, and, to contribute towards that Conversion, according to our Capacities and Opportunities.

portunities. But still we May, and Ought to be thus Affected to them, without running into an Approbation of them. Habitual and Notorious Sinners have no more Right to our Intire *Good Opinion*, than to our *Imitation* of them. For Charity does not Oblige us to Abandon Common Sense; and our Blessed Lord, the Perfect Pattern of Charity hath taught us, that *the tree is known by his fruit*. Nor can it ever Consist with *Charity*, which ever Implies an Intire *Love of God*, Thoroughly to Approve of His Open Enemies.

And the case is much the same, in respect of Those who Offend against the Rules of *Belief*, as of Those who break in upon the Rules of *Action*. But of some have *Compassion*, making a Difference. Charity will not suffer any one to throw off a Good Opinion of Those, who, though they be Attempted, and Shaken, and become *Weak in Faith*, by the Insinuations and Artifice of Deceivers, have not yet *cast off their First faith*, but appear Modest, and Humble, and Tractable, and Desirous to come unto the knowledge

ledge of the Truth. But if any man takes up Heretical opinions, in Opposition to the Mysteries plainly proposed to our Belief in the Scripture, and remains *Obstinate* and *Perverse*, and *Incorrigible* in the Profession and Vindication of such his Opinions, and in the Disbelief and Disavowance of those Mysteries, which God hath required us to Believe; we are no more obliged, by the Law of *Charity*, to entertain an Intire *Good Opinion* of him, than we are by the Rule of *Faith*, to become Unbelievers with him.

We cannot Avoid thinking, though we cannot be Easy under the Thought, that men are Infidels, when they Profess themselves to be so: And *Charity*, which always supposeth a Stedfast Faith, and an Inviolable *Love* of *God*, and of the *Truth*, can never Consist with a Perfect Approbation of Those, who do Resolutely and Notoriously Disobey and Dishonour *God*, by *Disbelieving*, and *Rejecting*, and *Opposing* the Truths, which he Expressly Requires them to *Believe*. And This, which is so Clear in it Self, appears under as Full a Light, in the *Scriptures*,

Scriptures, the Rule of our Duty, in This, as in every Other Particular. What *Opinion* could St. *Paul*, so Eminent for his *Charity*, * and filled with the *Holy Ghost*, be supposed to have of *Elymas the Sorcerer*, when he thus Address'd himself to him: *O full of all Subtilty, and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all righteousness!* And what *Opinion* could our Blessed Saviour himself be supposed to have of the Corrupted *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, when he Denounced the severest Woes against them, and styled them, † *Blind Guides and Hypocrites, Serpents and a Generation of Vipers.*

It will easily Appear, that there is no room for this notion, which is apt to arise from *Good Nature*, or, from a Worse Principle, in some mens minds, That we should still retain a Good Opinion of those, who Differ from us in matters of Judgment and Pure Belief, because in *Heaven* all Differences of Sentiments and Opinions will be Reconciled,

* Acts. xiii. 9, 10.

† Matt. xxiii. 23, 24, 33.

and all mens Thoughts, which, upon Earth were wont to Clash and Interfere, will be reduced to an intire Agreement. A Declaration of this kind, concerning mens Different opinions in this life, should not be made in General terms, but under some Distinctions and Restriction. For, though it be very plain, That mens Differences concerning things *Temporal* must cease with the Things themselves, and will not Debar them of God's Mercy, provided that such Differences be not attended, either with such Outward Behaviour, or such Inward Dispositions as are Forbid in the *Gospel*, and, That mens Different *Opinions* concerning Those things of *Religion*, which are Indifferent in their *Nature*, and are not become Necessary because *Commanded* by Proper Authority, are consistent with their Salvation: And, though it be Inconsistent with the Joys of *Heaven*, that there should be any Differences of Opinion There; yet This does not at all concern the Wretched case of those, who are Obstinate and Inflexible, in Disbelieving, and Contradicting, and Opposing

sing the Principal Mysteries revealed in the Gospel. For, if the Scriptures be True, those who do not stedfastly *Believe* them, will never be received into the Mansions of the Blessed.

Is it not therefore Necessary for every man to consider Seriously and Impartially, whether he does not retain the same Good Opinion of Perverse and Professed *Hereticks* and *Unbelievers*, as if they were not Chargeable with Heresy or Infidelity, notwithstanding that such an Opinion of Them is plainly Inconsistent with the *Love of God*? Whether he does not Allow Them an intire Liberty of Conversing with him, and take pleasure in their Conversation, and that without the least Expectation or Design of Reclaiming them, notwithstanding the Appointment of the Holy Spirit, that such persons should be * *Rejected*; notwithstanding that the same Holy Spirit hath given us this Direction, † *If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God*

* Tit. iii. 10.

† 2 John. 10, 11.

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speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds; and notwithstanding that the Love of the Truth cannot Consist with taking Delight in the Open Adversaries of it? Whether he does not by his Encouragement of Them, in any wise Embolden them to Persist in their Errors, and by Consequence contribute to their Destruction? Whether by that Encouragement he does not Advance their Reputation and Esteem, and by so doing plainly render them More Capable of spreading their Pernicious Doctrines, and of Seducing their Brethren? And, whether his being, in the least, Instrumental to the Propagation of Damnable Heresies amongst his Brethren, whereby they may bring upon themselves swift destruction, be not a Plain and most Dangerous Violation of Charity?

But in all Other cases, where a Good Opinion of our Neighbours is not thus Necessarily Precluded, it becomes a Necessary Part of Charity. If they are not Undeniably and Notoriously Immoral, or Unbelievers, we must not Indulge Jealousies or Suspicions that they are so; for

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Charity

Charity thinketh no Evil: And where Mens Abominations are not Manifest and *cannot be hid*, the Rule is, *In lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* And if mens Esteem of their Neighbour were but Equal to the Esteem they Commonly have of Themselves, he might very well depend upon their Good Opinion of him; upon their setting the Highest value on his Good Qualities and Actions; upon their passing the most Favourable and Kind construction on those Parts of his Behaviour, which do not appear in the Fairest Light; and, upon their making the utmost Allowance for his Miscarriages and Infirmities: All which is their Indispensable Duty.

To such Good Opinion of our Neighbour *Charity* requires that we should Add an Abhorrence of *Injuring* or *Offending* him, and an Easiness and Cheerfulness in *Forgiving* His Offences against us; A Gentle and Soft, a Condescending and Endearing Deportment towards him; A Sense of Satisfaction and Joy, on account of every thing, that is to him Satisfactory and Joyful; A Com-
passionate

passionate Regard to him in all his Sufferings, and Studious endeavours to Remove them; Fidelity and Amity, in Reproving him for his Vices and in Exhorting him to Virtue, in Correcting his Mistakes, and Supplying the Defects of his Knowledge; Earnest Desires and Constant Labours, to Secure his Right and Redress his Wrongs, to Guard him from the Mischiefs of Calumny and to Advance his Just Character, to Support him in his Difficulties and to Relieve his Wants; and, A Readiness and Delight in Contributing, by all possible methods, to his Happiness in This and a Future State. Thus may we Testify, that we are Adorned with *Charity*; A *Grace* Superiour even unto *Faith* and *Hope*; And, in what *Respects* it is so, I shall proceed in the

II. *Second* place Briefly to represent. It hath been observed, that in some Texts of Scripture, *Faith* denotes and implies the Intire Condition of Salvation; And there can be no Comparison, but that of Equals, betwixt True *Charity* and *Faith*, in This acceptance of it. But when

Faith is taken Strictly, in either of the other Two Significations of it, the Reasons of giving *Charity* the Preference to it are very Plain.

Though a firm Assent to the Truths Revealed in the Scripture be *Necessary*, yet it is not *Sufficient* to the Attainment of Life. Those Qualifications which are Necessarily required in a Believer, do not Necessarily flow from his Belief. *Faith* affects a man's *Understanding* alone; *Charity* Corrects and Governs his *Will* and *Affections*: He may Possibly yield the most stedfast Assent to the Scriptures, without Conforming his Life unto them; But *Charity* renders him Conformable to the Will of *God*, and Useful to *Men*, and fills up the Measure of his Duty to Both. *Faith* is the *Ground* of all his Acceptable Obedience; *Charity* is the *Completion* of it. The Immediate advantages of a man's Assent to the Scriptures do Terminate in Himself; The Benefits of his *Charity* do extend to all Other men, who are within the reach of his Beneficial Influence. *Faith* may be found without Any Good Works at all; But Every Good
Work

Work is the Immediate Effect of *Charity*. And if we measure the Different *Excellencies* of these Virtues by the *Duration* * of them, the Pre-eminence of Charity is very Clear. *Extraordinary* Faith, or, the *Faith of Miracles*, besides that even in the times † when it was vouchsafed, it was Necessary only to a Few persons, and Sufficient to the Salvation of None; those Times of its vouchsafement were very short, and it ceased in the first Ages of the Church. And *That* Faith, (an Assent to the Scriptures) which is a Duty of Universal Obligation, will cease together with our Lives; when the *Obligation* of Duties will Cease, and be succeeded by the *Reward* of them. But *Charity never faileth*: The Extent of it is Equal to the Duration, not only of the *Earth* but of *Heaven*. 'Tis our Duty in This, and will be our Eternal Employment in a Future State. And how Excellent must That virtue be which is of Everlasting Continuance, and the

* Chrysost. in Ep. 1. ad Cor. Homil. 34. & Gregor. Nyssen. de Anim. & Resur.
Homil. 6. in Ep. ad Tit. † Vide Chrysost.

Continuance of which will be the Support and Supply of our Everlasting Bliss?

Most of these Reasons of Preferring *Charity* unto *Faith*, are likewise Reasons of its Preference unto *Hope*, and are so easily Applicable, that they need not be Repeated. This Difference indeed is observable, that whereas *Charity* is not the Source of *Faith*, but the *Consequence* of it; *Hope* is the Immediate *Consequence* of *Charity*, and directly derived from it. Our Assurance that there is a Future state of Happiness prepared for Good men, is purely owing to our *Faith*; But the *Hope* of being our Selves Admitted into that State, ariseth Immediately from our being Conscious to our selves, that our *Faith* is Followed and Crowned by *Charity*. *Faith*, strictly speaking, cannot, as to its proper Acts and Exercise in the Understanding, be either Caused or Improved by *Charity*; but *Charity* gives both Rise and Improvement unto *Hope*. And, on This account, *Charity* is, in a greater Degree, Preferable to *Hope*, than to *Faith*. For though *Faith* without *Charity* be Imperfect, yet we

we may have *Faith*, from which Charity is to arise, before that Happy Effect be Actually drawn from it; whereas *Hope* can neither be Increas'd nor Begun without *Charity*. A man cannot but Love Happiness so as to *Desire* it, and a good opinion of Himself may lead him on to some *Expectation* of it; but, if he hath not *Charity*, That *Expectation* must prove Vain, and That *Desire* sink into Everlasting *Despair*. True *Faith* and *Hope* are Necessary and Divine Endowments; But, without *Charity*, there is no colour of Consolation in the One, nor of Justification by the Other.

It remains, that we should proceed to some Application of this Discourse. And

First, Since a Stedfast *Faith* is no less Necessary to Salvation, than a *Holy Life*; It highly concerns us, to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. If it Must be, and that Moving occasion of our Sorrow and Pity cannot be avoided, that * *Evil men and Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*: Nevertheless, Continue thou in the

* 2 Tim. iii. 13, 14, 15.

things thou hast learned and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures. Let us Esteem it, as it ought to be Esteem'd, an Inestimable Blessing, that we have been carefully instructed in the *Scriptures*, as soon as ever we became Capable of Instruction; And let us Testify our Gratitude, for having so Early Imbibed those Sacred Doctrines, by our Firm Adherence to them. Let no Vainglorious and Arrogant, no Bold and Daring, no Artful and Insinuating, no Designing and Fallacious men, who *wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction* Deceive and draw us into the same Destruction with Them.

And because our Danger is most Apt to arise from the Various Interpretations, which have been, or may be given of the Holy Scriptures; the most Dangerous Errors and Heresies being Introduced under the Colour of Sacred Authority; Let us therefore provide for our Safety, by Depending, as it is our Duty to Depend, upon the General and Uninterrupted

interrupted Sense of the Christian Church, concerning those passages of Scripture, *which are hard to be understood*, Concluding, That the Church, which is said to be * *the Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, and upon the Authority of which the Canon of the Holy Scripture depends, must be a competent Witness, if not a Judge of the *Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints*, and the long Prescription † for truth, supported by her Written Testimony, must be better grounds for a private Christian to rest upon, than any Modern Conjectures; That the Determination of no Single person, is Equal to the Determinations of Multitudes, which have Excell'd in Judgment and Learning and Piety: That, besides the Other Evil and Perilous consequences of Rejecting the Authority of the Christian Church, Those must needs be thought to run into manifest Danger of Error, who, in Opposition to that Authority, do Depend upon the Judgment of One, or a Few particular persons,

* 1 Tim. iii. 15.
script. adv. Hæret.

† Vide Tertullian. de Præ-

because

because 'tis so Commonly found, both amongst the Ancients and Moderns, that a man hath been at One time fully persuaded, that those things are False, which at Another time he verily thought to be True; For, though the Owning and Retracting of Errors be Necessary, and highly Commendable also, when it proceeds from no Interested Views, but from a pure Ingenuous Temper, and regard to *Truth*; yet when a man hath given This proof of his Ingenuous Temper, neither He himself, nor any Other Considerate person would for the future Depend upon his Judgment in Difficult points, at least, in Opposition to the Church; because he can never be more firmly persuaded, that he is in the Right, than he hath been already, when he proved to be in the Wrong, and therefore may as well hereafter Deny what he now Affirms, as he now Denies what he Affirm'd before: That it will be Difficult for any Particular person, to reconcile that profound *Humility* which the Gospel requires, with the Opposition of his Own Judgment, to the Judgment of the

the

the Christian Church, or, to prove, that he is so far guided and governd by the Holy Spirit, as * *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*: That if Any Particular Person may take the liberty of Interpreting by his Own Judgment, in Opposition to the Christian Church; Every other particular person, in the like circumstances, may take the same Liberty, for the same Reason: That if All Particular persons may take that Liberty, they may Possibly fix the Objects of Faith in a Direct Contradiction to one another: That if it be Lawful and Sufficient to such Particular persons, to Assent to the Objects of Faith, so fixed by their several Judgments, it may become Lawful and Sufficient, to Assent unto Things which are False; for some of the Objects thus Assigned must be so, if they are Contradictory to one another: And, That if it can become Lawful and Sufficient to Any one to Believe a Falshood, 'tis Necessary for *None* to believe the Truth.

* Rom. xii. 3.

It may also deserve our Consideration, That since the Doctrines of the *Trinity*, and of a General Resurrection, and all the Other Objects of our Faith Necessary unto Salvation, are in Some Texts of Scripture so Plainly Revealed, that every man of Common Understanding, with an Honest mind, may easily perceive the Certainty of them; 'tis therefore incumbent upon Every man, who would be Saved, to adhere to the Truth so Plainly Reveal'd, notwithstanding that he cannot so clearly apprehend the Full meaning of some Other Difficult Texts, and notwithstanding the most Plausible Fallacies which are built upon such Texts, by those who Pervert them. For Plain Texts are not to be Interpreted by those which are more Obscure: When therefore the Obscure ones do seem any way Repugnant to those which are Easy and Plain, 'tis highly Reasonable and Just, as well as Modest, in any man, to Imagine, that the Obscure ones are not Truly and Perfectly Understood by him. And when the Truth of the Gospel Plainly and Clearly appears, let all Glosses
and

and Interpretations, which stand in Opposition to it, be at once Rejected and Despised. But,

2^{ly}, and to Conclude; Since the Sole Belief of the Scriptures, notwithstanding the *Necessity* of it, is not of it Self *Effectual* to the Attainment of the Blessings proposed to us, let our *Faith* be fruitful of *Fervent Charity*, that the Fruits of our *Charity* may lead us to a Lively *Hope*. Though we had all Faith, so that we could *remove Mountains*, yet, without Charity, we should in vain call to the Mountains, to *fall on us, and cover us* from the *Wrath of God*; Or, though we should be, in our *Hopes*, Exalted as high as *Heaven*, yet, without *Charity*, we can never be Admitted There. And 'tis obvious, that as no *Branch* of Charity is more frequently and Earnestly inculcated in the Scriptures, than the Relief of the Indigent; so there cannot easily be found more proper *Objects* of it, than Those which now call for your Tender Concern; Nor can they hope that their Cries will ever be heard by Men, if not by Us, who are under Peculiar

culiar and most engaging Obligations to hear them.

Indeed the Arguments, which have been offer'd in favour of This Charity, are so Proper and so Enlarged, that they do not easily Admit of any Addition, and have been so Effectual, that they do not Want it. Therefore it may be expected, that I should rather Acknowledge, than Excite Your Liberality. For *Justice* may seem to require the One, as well as *Charity* the Other. And yet even *Justice*, as well as *Charity*, seems to plead for your Perseverance in *your work and labour of love*: If in Any case these words be Applicable to the supply of our Neighbour's Wants, it must be in that of Those, who now Implore your Assistance; *Withhold not Good from them, to whom it is Due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* Their Wants are very Affecting, and so are their Deservings too; Wants and Deservings, which may in a special manner, claim a Favourable and Affectionate Regard at your hands. For if every man, who hath a Just sense of God and Divine
Worship,

Worship, hath ever thought himself obliged to Minister unto the Necessities of Those who give *Attendance at the Altar*, what Kind Offices may not Their Distress'd Widows and Orphans expect from You, who are under the Additional obligation, of standing in the same common Relation to the Altar with Them. Let your *Bowels of Mercies* therefore still yern towards Your Brethren, and let the Influence of the *Holy Spirit*, Graciously moving You to Charity and Compassion, be Faithfully Obey'd by you; *That he which hath begun a good work in you, may perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST; To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, now, Henceforth and for ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N V.

The Necessity of Positive Duty or Actual Goodness.

TITUS II. Part of the 14th Verse.

Zealous of good Works.

AN essential Part of Christianity is now before us; and whosoever falls short of this Character here given, and yet presumes to account himself the faithful Servant of *Christ*, is mistaken in his Notions of Himself, and frustrates the Purposes of his Redeemer. For the whole verse runs thus, *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

By

By *good Works*, we may understand in General, the Exercise of Goodness, whether in Acts of Justice, Piety, or Charity. For the sincere Disciples of *Christ* are here first represented, as *Redeem'd from all Iniquity, and Purified*; which Expressions do imply, their being delivered from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin. And when 'tis added, that those who *are Purified*, must be moreover *Zealous of good Works*, 'tis in these Words plainly signified, if it be not the peculiar Sense of them, that all faithful Christians are obliged, not only to avoid the *Commission* of Sin, but *Actually* to perform Positive Duties; that they must not only *cease to do evil*, as the Prophet *Isaiah* expresseth it, which is described by *Negative* Goodness; but also *learn to do well*, which is called *Positive* Goodness, and be *zealous* in so doing. These two Propositions therefore are observable from the Words;

I. That Positive Duty, or the Actual Exercise of Goodness, is indispensably required at our Hands. And,

O

II. That

II. That *Zeal* is the necessary Qualification of Positive and Actual Goodness.

I. That Positive, &c.

And this I shall represent, *first*, under a *general* View: And, *secondly*, under some more *particular* Considerations. And,

First, That we are obliged to the actual Exercise of Goodness will appear, in a *general* Way, if we do but turn a Thought to the State and Order of created Beings, and the Designs of their Creatour. For though no Virtue or Vice can be ascribed to those Beings, which have no Understanding; yet remiss and negligent Man may form a just and useful Reproof to himself, upon this Observation, That whilst He, who is the Glory of visible Creatures, fails of exercising his Powers and Abilities, and of Answering the Ends of his Creation, all the other Parts even of the natural World do exert themselves to their utmost Capacity, in promoting and fulfilling the great Ends and Purposes of Nature. The Sun ceaseth not to visit, and cheer, and beautify

beautify the World, but *cometh forth as a Bridegroom out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a Giant to run his Course*; And if it once *stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down, about a whole Day*, this was owing to the special Restraining of the Creatour; for Otherwise, *It goeth forth from the uttermost Part of the Heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again*. And so the other Celestial Bodies maintain their constant Revolutions, for the Illustration of God's Glory, the Benefit of Mankind, and the Regularity and Harmony of the World.

And if we bring down our Prospect into the lower Regions, there all the Orders of Beings purely Animate are in a State of Motion and Activity, under their proper Proportions. And those things here below, as well as those above, which are destitute of Life, are not yet wanting in their *Motion*, but are making continual Advances, agreeably to their proper Tendencies, for the Accomplishment of their proper Ends. The Seas are fulfilling the Course of Nature by constant Agitations, and, for the like

Purpose, the Springs break forth into the *Rivers, which run among the Hills*. Even the Earth it self, Unactive and Sluggish as it is, must not stand an Exception to the general Laws of Activity, which the Other natural Bodies are governed by, but bears its proper Part, and moves in Concert with them.

Thus it is in the Constitution of things Natural: It doth not suffice that they do not act in a plain Opposition to the Intentions of their Maker, and the Laws assigned to them; but that they should not act at all, is likewise absolutely Inconsistent with their State, and the Design of their Author. Operation is the End of created Beings, and each must actually perform its proper Offices, in order to the Perfection of the Whole. And such a Course of Operations, proportioned to the different Conditions of Beings, is still more eminent in the intellectual and moral World. The blessed Angels, which are vested with the Highest Principles of Activity, are most remarkable for the Quickness and Constancy of their Motions, in Obedience

to their Maker. Thus, in *Jacob's Vision*, we have an Account of * *the Angels of God ascending and descending* betwixt Earth and Heaven; And the Reason of this is plainly given by the *Apostle*, they are *all ministering Spirits*: To which Purpose we read of † *the seven EYES, which are the seven SPIRITS of God sent forth into all the Earth*. And when with these Passages of Scripture we compare those others, wherein we have an Account of the *Angels standing round about the Throne, and falling before the Throne on their Faces, and worshipping God*, we have in one view their Diligence in exercising Positive Acts of Homage and Obedience to the Almighty.

From all which it appears, that the several Powers and Capacities of all Beings are to be Actually exercised, according to the Direction and Appointment of God; and that if any of those Beings should only suspend the Exercise of their Powers and Capacities, so as not to act at All, according to their respective

* Gen. xxviii. 12.

† Revel. v. 6.

Conditions, they would thereby as plainly violate the divine Appointment, as if they should Act in a Direct Contrariety to it.

Thus the general Laws of created Beings do point out our Obligation to Positive Duty, or, the Actual Exercise of Goodness, and should be unto us a constant Rule of Instruction and Admonition; A method of Instruction, not only very Useful, in the Nature of it, and therefore necessary to be mentioned; but likewise recommended in the sacred Scriptures themselves, the Standard and Fountain of spiritual Wisdom and Instruction.

There we are taught, that *the Heavens declare the Glory of God*, the Elements also, and the Compounds of them, *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storm, fulfilling his Word*: There we have an Admonition to exert our selves in proper Testimonies of Duty to God, taken from the natural Notices and Regards which are exerted by inferiour Beings, *the Ox knowing his owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib*: There we are required

to learn Application, and Diligence in the Execution of Duty, from the Activity of very inconsiderable Creatures, labouring in pursuit of their natural Tendencies and Direction, *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise:* There we are supplied by our Blessed Saviour Himself with an Argument, for the Actual Exercise of Goodness, taken from an Observation upon the Trees of the Field; * *Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire.* Not only those Trees which produce Corrupt Fruit, but those which do not Actually bring forth Good Fruit, those which produce No Fruit at All, must be destroyed. For, that this is the Meaning of the Text, is very plain from our Lord's Parable of the Fig-tree; The Owner whereof † *said unto the dresser of his Vineyard, Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* To which nothing could justly be opposed but this, *Lord,*

* Matt. vii. 19.

† Luke xiii.

let it alone this Year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear Fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. When it finally proves Fruitless, it must, in all reason, be finally Destroyed.

To this purpose our Blessed Saviour, in the Parable of the * *Seed Sown*, represents the Faithful and only acceptable Servants of God under the View of That *Seed*, which Actually *brought forth Fruit*, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty. And in the Parable of the † *Talents*, he introduceth the Person, who had *hid his Talent in the Earth*, under the Character of a *slothful*, and *wicked*, and *unprofitable* Servant, and justly obnoxious to the severest Punishment: Where it should be well observed, that This Servant had not employed his Talent to his Lord's Detriment or Dishonour; that he had not Abused it, or perverted it to any Evil Purposes, in Contempt of his Lord, or direct Rebellion against him; he had not so much as

* Matth. xiii.

† Matth. xxv.

Squandred and Wasted his Talent by any Means whatsoever: But he had neglected to improve it, to apply it to Any Purpose, to make any Use of it at All; and upon this single Point, because he was Slothful and Unactive, did his Condemnation turn: Though he had Actually committed no Evil, yet because he had not actually done any Good, the dreadful Sentence is given against him, *Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darknes, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* The *unprofitable Servant* is the Parallel to the *fruitless Tree*, which must not be suffered to stand at all, because it would stand to no other purpose but to cumber the Ground.

How superficial therefore and imperfect must our Notions of our own State be, if we do not plainly perceive ourselves obliged, in order to Salvation, not only to withstand the Temptations of Sin, but to fulfil the various Duties which are enjoined: Which may still further appear from that more *Particular* Consideration of this point which is now in the

Second

Second Place to be added to the *General* One already offer'd: Where I shall represent our obligation to *Good Works*, or, to the actual Exercise of Goodness, as such Good Works may be considered,

I. In respect of God, as we are Created and Redeemed by him, and Subject to him, and therefore Obligated to contribute our utmost to His Honour. For thus *St. Paul* does at once give us a Rule of Duty; and the Reason of it, * *Glorify God in your Bodies, and in your Spirits, which are God's.* And the Method of Answering this high Obligation, and Accomplishing this great End, is assigned by our Blessed Lord himself; *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Whilst we deny our selves unlawful Pleasures, and unlawful Advantages, out of a Sense of Duty, grounded upon the Love of God, we do undoubtedly acquit our selves in an Acceptable manner

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† Matt. v. 16.

before him; and if the Other parts of our Behaviour are but Agreeable to This, we shall not fail of the Recompence of Reward: And, as Corrupt Inclinations Within are More Powerful, and Temptations from Without More Engaging, Acts of Self-denial will be still More Approved in the Judgment of God, and Crowned with a Higher Reward. But still 'tis possible that we may deny our selves the commission of most agreeable Sins, and yet contribute Little or Nothing to the advancement of God's Glory. The abstaining from sinful Actions is indeed the preventing direct Dishonour to God; but our Obligation to promote God's Honour does signifie a great deal more than our avoiding plain instances of Dishonour towards Him: It implies Positive and Absolute Duties, whereby we shall give direct occasion of Celebrating His Praise, and propagating the Glory of His Name. And therefore all Those who are so far Innocent and Harmless, that they do not launch out into any Enormities, but yet spend their Lives, and possess their Talents, in a Dream-
ing,

ing, and Useless, and Unactive manner, are Culpable and Inexcusable.

We are instructed, that we must *not live unto our SELVES, but unto the LORD*; and that *whatsoever we do, we must do all to the Glory of God*: And our Saviour teacheth us, How we are to promote God's Glory; * *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit.*

All Holy Men have; in their several Proportions, answer'd the Character of the *Baptist*, who † *was a burning and a shining Light*. They have been eminent for their Acts of Piety, testifying their Constancy and Fervency in the Worship of God; Eminent in the utmost Dangers, for the open Declaration and Profession of their Faith, for the Instigation and Encouragement and Confirmation of others in it, in Opposition to Profane and Gain saying Men; Eminent for their Liberality and Charity, ‡ *honouring God with their SUBSTANCE*, as *Solomon* expresseth it; Eminent for their Earnest Labours in Relieving the

* John xv. 8.

† John v. 3.

‡ Prov. iii. 9.

Oppressed,

Oppressed, Reducing the Vicious, Instructing the Ignorant, Convincing the Erroneous, Strengthening the Weak, Satisfying the Doubtful, Exciting the Negligent, and Guarding Religion from the Attempts of its Enemies on every Side.

St. *Paul's* Greatest Glory is, that he *Laboured more abundantly than they all*, in promoting the Glory of God. When these Vigilant and Active, these Industrious and Strenuous Instruments of God's Honour shall appear in the Judgment, how Beautiful and Joyful, how Resplendent and Glorious will their Appearance be? And how contemptible, and dismal, and dejected must those other Thoughtless Creatures appear, who have suffer'd their Lives to run down in Sloth and Indolence, Neglecting the Honour of their *Maker*? Whilst the *One* inherits the Glory of *Good Works*; the *Other*, having been unfruitful, must sink under Shame and Confusion of Face. But,

2. The Actual Performance of Good Works will further appear necessary, when consider'd in Respect of our *Neighbour*. For, next to the Advancement

ment of God's Glory, which is the chief End, and therefore should be the chief Aim of every Rational Creature, the Good of *Mankind* demands the Exercise of Goodness at our Hands. And as it is observed above, that our Obligation to *Glorifie* God, does lay us under a Necessity of all such Positive Duties, as may be subservient to that Great Purpose and does not consist in the pure Avoidance of Wicked Actions, which would reflect Dishonour upon him; so here it is obvious, that the Good which we are to do unto our Brethren, is Direct and Positive, and does not only consist in our forbearing to Hurt and Annoy them.

Under the Great Conflicts betwixt Kingdoms, in the direful State of War, That which Succours and Supports Another, in the Defence of its just Rights and Privileges, is intitled to the proper Glories of Beneficence; but that which stands Neuter, deserves no Acknowledgments, because it confers no *Benefits*, and is but One Degree removed from the State of a professed Enemy. 'Tis by no Means a sufficient Justification, which

which Men commonly offer in their own Favour, That they have done no Injury to their Neighbours; for wide is the Difference betwixt an Oppressour and Benefactour, betwixt the Charitable and Injurious. It may easily happen, that He who is not so desperate as to become the One, is not yet found in the hopeful State of the Other. No Man can value himself, for Adding much to the Happiness of Mankind, purely on this Account, that he is not a Thief or a Robber. 'Tis not our keeping to the Letter of the Sixth Commandment, that fills up the Measure of Duty to our Neighbour, in regard to his Life; for as we must not destroy it, we stand Further obliged, to Protect it, and to Crown it with Comforts, by proper Acts of our own, to the utmost of our Power. 'Tis not sufficient that we do not *Hate* our Neighbour; but we must moreover Actually and Ardently *love* him, and give all possible Demonstrations of that Love, by such Fruits of it, as may be most Beneficial to him: 'Tis not sufficient, that we do not *cover any Thing that is His,*
but

but we must moreover communicate unto him that which is our Own, as His Exigencies require, and Our Abilities allow.

Those have little Reason to expect Admission into the Society of the Blessed Above, who do not Contribute their utmost to the Happiness of Humane Society upon Earth. When we are taught that the Fruitless Tree must be cut down, that it may not be an Incumbrance upon the World, which receives no Advantage from it; what can those Unprofitable Souls think of themselves, which serve to no other Purpose, but to drag their Bodies through the Benefits of the Air, which they scarce deserve to breath in? Let them so far apply the Parable, as to consider, that though they are let alone for this Year also, yet God's Long-suffering will have a Period; and when they are *Hewen down, they shall be cast into the Fire.*

These Two Particulars are the Weightiest Arguments of our Obligations to Positive Duty, or the Actual exercise of Goodness; but still there are some Other

ther Considerations, which may be a Further Illustration of this Point; As,

3. That Positive Goodness is necessary to prove our Fidelity in the Service of God. Whosoever neglects the Affirmative Precepts, whilst he observes the Negative ones, cannot be esteemed a Faithful Servant; because he doth but observe a Part of his Lord's Will. And therefore as he falls short in his Service, he must do so in his Reward too. Though God rewards all that is *Religion* in us, yet he rewards nothing else, and doth not place to His account, what is done upon a Worldly Convenience to our Selves. And 'tis observable, that if we go no further in our Duty, than Abstaining from Excesses, there is nothing in This, but what Nature, without Religion, would suggest and support. The several Rules of Abstinence are so many Laws of Self-preservation; And 'tis possible that our Obedience may rise to the Height of These, whilst we do not so much serve God as our selves. Therefore 'tis observable, that the ancient Philosophers, making Nature, rather than the Will of God,

the Rule of their Virtue, did turn their Precepts chiefly upon Negative Goodness. But the *Son of God*, who came from Heaven to Reveal his Father's Will, hath taught us to give Other and higher Evidences of our Fidelity to God. The several Parables which have been mentioned, and the Parable of the Virgins, and the Account of the last Judgment, do All signifie, that our Fate at the Last day will be determined by the Measures of Positive Goodness; Which will appear,

4. To be still Further necessary in us, as it is an Engaging Recommendation and Endearment of Religion to Others. 'Tis obvious that Those Duties are peculiarly Reasonable and Necessary which reflect Honour upon our Holy Religion; as Positive Goodness ever does. The Obligations of this kind are so Great, that a Negligence or Indifference towards them is accounted Criminal. *He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.* The Disciples of our Lord are, for the Influence of their Example, and for extending

tending the Credit of Religion; compar-
ed to the *Salt of the Earth, and to a*
City set on an Hill.

The Uncommon and Shining Virtues
of the first Christians were, under God,
highly Instrumental towards the Conver-
sion of the World. Their Perseverance
in well-doing, their Zeal for their Ma-
ster, and the Effects of their Charity to
all the World, were so many *demonstra-*
tions of the Spirit. The *Apologists* did
ever appeal to this Known and Unexcep-
tionable Testimony in their several *Apo-*
logies for the *Christian* Religion. And
this Argument was of the Greater force,
because it was such as the Ignorant could
easily Conceive, and the Learned could
neither Despise nor Disprove.

Such was the Excellency of Their Ex-
amples, and such should be Ours, if we
would be rank'd amongst those, *who turn*
many to Righteousness. We should not
be Content with Low and Obscure Per-
formances, but sometimes Rise to such,
as This Day testifies; such as may strike
Emulation or Reverence into the Behold-
ers,

ers, and may Adorn and Recommend that Truth which we profess.

The *Apostle* exhorts to * *Adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,* and, to † *provide for Honest* (καλὰ, *Honourable, things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the Sight of Men.*

5. Positive Goodness is Necessary to that Perfection which the Gospel requires. A *Christian* is described under Characters Importing, not only that he is *purged from dead Works*, but that he *faithfully serves the living God*; not only that he hath *put off the Old Man*, but that he hath *put on the New Man*, in order to become *an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

The *Christian Institution* is a Discipline Qualifying us for Heaven, and the several Rules of the One do, in some respect, Assimilate our Affections to the Other. That Flame of Divine Love is to be raised in This Life, which is to shine forth in Full Glory for ever in the Next. But Negative Goodness is at a

* Tit. ii. 10.

† 2 Cor. viii. 21.

great Distance from this Perfection, and is indeed little better than the Infancy and Elements of Religion. *Repentance from dead Works*, is but the previous Disposition to that Perfect Goodness, which is required in a *Christian*. The Restraint of the Passions, which made so great a Part of *Philosophy*, is no more than a Preparation to the Principal Duties of *Christianity*.

The Peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel begun, where the Other Institutions ended. When Man's *Reason* was at a loss, and could carry him no further, *Faith* came in to his Succour, that he might go on to Perfection. And as Faith is in it self the Highest and Noblest Principle, so it is a practical Principle, and by *Works is Faith made perfect*.

The Gospel does not only require those Good Works which were enforced by the Law of *Nature*, and that in Higher degrees of Excellency, than what they appear'd in before; but does likewise call for *Additional* Acts of Goodness, in such Instances as could never have issued forth from Natural Light. Those Good Works,

which stand in the First rank under the *Gospel*, are such as *Reason* without *Faith* could not discover, and *Nature* without *Grace* could not perform.

And all this ought to be well consider'd by Those, who go on in a Middle way betwixt Saints and Sinners; who, though they be free from the Vices of the Carnal Man, are yet at a great Distance from the Perfections of the Spiritual. They satisfy themselves, if they step not aside into Wrong Paths, though they do not Move forward in the Right One, *toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. They hang in a State of Indifferency between God and the World, without any vehemence of Tendency toward Either. And though they have Experience enough, to see through this Grave cheat, which is so commonly put upon Life, yet they still remain Indulgent of Ease, and Patient of Delusion. They are not willing to offend God by flagrant Acts of Iniquity; but they continually provoke him, by neglecting *to do those things that are pleasing in his Sight*.

Wherefore

Wherefore let every *Unprofitable* Servant Carefully view the Precipice, whereon he stands; that he may betimes retire from the Dreadful Brink to a safer Situation: Let his Total Neglect of Good Works be Succeeded by Earnestness, and Assiduity, and Fervency in the Performance of them. And This leads me in the next Place briefly to represent,

II. That *Zeal* is the Necessary Qualification of Positive Duty, or Acts of Goodness; for 'tis incumbent upon the Servants of our Lord, that they should be *Zealous* of Good Works. The value of Performances does much depend upon That Disposition of Mind from whence they flow. When Good Works are done with a Negligence and Unconcern, as if it were perfectly Indifferent to the Man, whether they be Undertaken, or let alone, whether they Succeed or Miscarry; They then sit upon him with a very ill grace, and he may easily expect, that What is Performed with so much Coldness, will meet with a Cold Reception. 'Tis the Life and Spirit, the Sprightliness and the Fervour of Religious enterprizes, that

P 4

must

must recommend them to God, the Discerner of Spirits. It was this Warmth of Concern for God's Honour in *Phineas*, that must be *Imputed unto him for Righteousness, among all posterities for Evermore.* The very same thing done with Reluctancy, and after much Instigation, and with a Colder hand, had been destitute of the Ornament, and Unworthy the Reward.

The utmost Glory of *Elijah*, shines forth in this short Character, *I have been very JEALOUS for the Lord God of Hosts.* And there is nothing upon Record that redounds more to *David's* Honour, than the Expressions of his Zeal in preparing a place for the Ark of the Lord: *I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house, nor climb up into my bed: I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber, neither the Temples of my head to take any rest.* True Zeal will break through all Opposition, and Difficulties, and Discouragements; sustain all Inconveniencies with Alacrity, and render us restless and Dissatisfied, till we engage in the work and labour of love.

With

With such Eagerness and Earnestness do all Good men constantly approach the Throne of Grace, in Publick and Private Devotions; with such Eagerness and Earnestness do they embrace all Opportunities of performing Works of Charity and Compassion; with such Eagerness and Earnestness do they press forward unto every Good Work, for the Advancement of God's Honour, and the Benefit of Mankind. And whosoever does not find himself affected with this Necessary and Blessed Disposition, should bewail the Imperfection and Deadness which he still labours under, and incessantly implore the Communications of the Spirit of God, that he may be actuated with the Holy Flame, and become *Zealous of Good Works*.

The Particulars, which have been Illustrated, do bear so Near and Plain a Relation to the Occasion and Purposes of this great Assembly, that Your Thoughts must needs run easily into the Application of them. For as we may safely attribute the Character of *Good Works*, to Those Charitable Provisions, which we have

have now under Consideration; So we may with Equal Propriety, Approve and Recommend the *Zeal* of those Charitable Souls, which have engaged in This Good Work, and which have been Earnest and Eager in their Desires and Endeavours, to propagate and carry it on to Perfection.

'Tis not more evident, that the Advancement of God's Honour, and the Benefit of our Brethren, are Proper Ends of Good Works, than it is that Those Great and Glorious Ends are duely Answer'd by that Education, which is given in the *Charity-Schools*, to Those Helpless Children, whose Happiness it is, that you Justly regard their Misery.

Is not That Work Manifestly and Highly conducive to God's Honour, wherein 'tis provided, that the Image of God, Originally stamp'd upon Man, shall not be intirely wore out and finally disappear, but be Renewed and Restored to Beauty and Lustre in great Numbers of those, on whom it must Otherwise have remained Miserably Defaced and Neglected: Wherein 'tis provided, that That Noble Soil, which must Otherwise have been

Barren

Barren and Unfruitful, or over-run with Tares and Noxious Weeds, shall be abundantly Cultivated, and Inriched, and Productive of a Glorious Harvest: Wherein 'tis provided, that those Souls, which had Otherwise been exposed an Easy Prey to Evil Spirits and Evil Men, shall be reduced from the Snares and Captivity of Satan, and become at once the Witnesses, and the Instruments of the Glory of God: Wherein 'tis provided, that Those, whose Voices had Otherwise been turn'd into Strains of Profaneness and Blasphemy, and all Iniquity, shall be qualified to bear a Blessed part, as your Ears have hear'd this Day, in Melodious and Moving Sounds of Praises and Thanksgivings to God, Preludes to the Transporting *Hallelujahs*, which shall be sung by the Choir of Heaven, before the glorious Throne of God for ever: Wherein 'tis provided, that the various Circumstances of Benefit in *the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, shall be properly and diligently Applied and Improved, *for the Furthurance of the Gospel*; and that the *Temples of the Holy Ghost* may be

be multiplied: Wherein 'tis provided, that Those who, even in the Land of Promise, might yet continue *Strangers unto the Covenant of Promise*, shall be taught betimes the Necessity of Building Christian Lives upon Christian Principles, that they may not Dishonour God, by Denying or Neglecting that *Faith*, which he hath required as the necessary Foundation of Morality under the Gospel, and the indispensable Condition of Salvation: Wherein 'tis provided, that the Glory of God may shine forth in This great Article of it, the Effect of This Gracious Promise, which the Holy Spirit hath laid great Strefs upon, *All shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them*: And, wherein 'tis provided, not only that the Doctrines of the Gospel may be Inculcated and Embraced at present, but that They may be handed down with Advantage to Succeeding Generations. God is pleased to express a particular Approbation and Acceptance of that Sollicitude for his Honour, which *Abraham* testified, by Transmitting a Sense of Religion to his Posterity. *Shall I hide*

I hide from ABRAHAM that thing which I do, seeing that all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, that they keep the Way of the Lord.

There is indeed this Difference betwixt Your Endeavours to Propagate Religion, and Those of *Abraham*, That Yours do want the Support of Paternal Authority, which his had: But there is This difference also, that Your Sollicitude in Promoting God's Honour, and Deriving the Blessings of Religion upon Times to come, cannot possibly be the more Binding or Confirm'd by the Additional Ties of Natural Affection, as the Patriarchs possibly might. The Children which you are Qualifying to convey Religion with Safety and Success unto Posterity, are Yours purely by Adoption.

But still the Honour of God, though it be your *Principal* Aim, is not the Sole Inducement to your Glorious Enterprizes and Designs. You are pursuing some Other Ends, but Those such as, next to God's Honour, should lie uppermost

most in the Purposes of all Wise and Good Men, and do both Justifie and Demand your Zeal. For Your Prospects are, the special Advantages of Those, whom you take into your Protection, and the General Benefits of the Community.

That the Designs and Management of the Charity-Schools are Justly calculated for the Special Advantage of Those who are so happy as to be taken into them, cannot be doubted, and will not want to be proved, till it shall cease to be Universally Granted by Mankind, that Knowledge and Industry, Good Manners and Modesty, Probity and Piety, and all kinds of Virtue, with the Blessed Consequences of them, in This and a Future State, are Preferable to Ignorance and Idleness, Rudeness and Impudence, Dishonesty and Impiety, and all Kinds of Vice, together with those Varieties of Mischief and Misery, which flow from These Impure Fountains, and must Unavoidably flow from them for Ever.

And

And if any Nation under Heaven should be so far removed from the Common Sense of all Other Nations under Heaven, as not to perceive that its Prosperity and Glory do very much depend upon a Design adapted, with no less Prudence than Piety, to the Extirpation of Vice and the Advancement of Virtue; such a singular Race of Men would not easily be thought to Deserve so High a Blessing, which they know not how to Esteem.

If Virtues be, in the Nature of Things, the firmest Sinews of Society; and moreover that Kingdom, which provides most Effectually for the Support and Honour of Religion, hath the best Title to Divine Favour; what Blessings may we not expect from Heaven, if this Beautiful Branch of Charity should but Spread and Flourish, and the Shadow of it become a Sacred Shelter to the Land?

This Design is of so Great Consequence to Religion, perhaps of Greater Consequence than any other Design which hath been set on Foot since the Reformation, that if it should happily be espoused

spoused by the Publick, and become National, it might, in the Event, prove a Just reason of our hopes, that God will bestow upon us all the Publick Blessings which are promised to Righteous Nations.

Let our Enemies then Trust in their Spears and their Mighty Men of Valour, and leave all Concern for God's Honour out of their Schemes and their Counsels; Let Us but provide for the Propagation of his holy Religion, and we may safely leave the Issue of Things to His Gracious Disposal. Let us then continually add to the Numbers of such Innocents as are here before us, Evidences of your Abundant Love to Them, and to their Saviour; and therefore qualified to appear as most Proper and Acceptable Advocates in your Behalf, before the Throne of Grace, and you will have no great Reason to dread the Might or the Machinations of your Enemies: For *who shall harm you, if you be, in this Eminent Sense, Followers and Supporters of that which is Good?*

If therefore any Persons should happen to become Audacious enough to oppose this Excellent Design of promoting God's Honour, they would have too much Reason to fear that He may *get himself Honour upon them*, in a Sense not very Agreeable to them, as he *got himself Honour upon Pharaoh and all his Host*. And the Propitious Dispensations of Heaven, which are the only safe and immoveable Foundation of every Government, do so much depend upon the Success of this Charitable and Pious Design, which is Manifestly, and in an High Degree, subservient to God's Honour, that whosoever Meditates the least Opposition, or Obstruction to it, may Justly be Suspected, whatever Plausible Pretences he may urge in his own Favour, of Meditating Malignant and Pernicious Purposes against the *Government*; And whosoever proceeds to an Actual Opposition to This Design, does in Effect Act in Conjunction with those who have Actually *drawn their Swords* for the Destruction of the King and Constitution. For That Imputation may properly fall

Q upon

upon Those who dare to *set their Mouth against the Heavens*, and by Confounding the Instruments and Means of National Piety, Provoke the most High to pour down his Judgments upon the Nation.

Indeed if any particular Persons concerned in this great Design should, by any kind of Iniquity or Enormity, become Obnoxious, Reason and Religion require, that They should suffer condign Punishment, in common with other Offenders; And a peculiar Infamy would rest upon Them, who are Happily engaged in so Sacred a Design, if They should, upon any Account, be found in the Number of *Evil doers*. But still, neither the *Demerits* nor the *Deserts* of particular Persons, can alter the Nature of Things: The Cause which is Sacred, ought to be accounted inviolable still; And every Man's Obligations, not only to dread the Thoughts of opposing it, but to Espouse and Promote it, and that with Constancy, and Zeal, and Delight, are still the same, still indispensably Incumbent upon him.

Finally therefore, Let other Mens Neglect of this Good Work be answer'd by your Earnest Concern for it; Let their Coldness be Answer'd by Your Zeal; and let their Opposition to it, if it be possible for such an Impious Opposition ever to arise, be repell'd and defeated by Your Activity in providing for its Support and Accomplishment. And let all Those join with you in your Holy and Indefatigable Labours, who would evince that their Professions of Religion are not purely Formal, and Superficial, and Hypocritical; who would faithfully bear Their Part, with all Other created Beings, in Displaying the Glory of their Creatour; who would act Correspondently to the Glorious Privileges vouchsafed them in the Gospel, and Testify that *Christ* is in them of a Truth; who are really affected with the Love of their Country, and a Desire of its Peace and Prosperity; who do Truly wish to see the Number of Those who shall be saved continually Encreased, to be Themselves in that Blessed Number, and to be the Blessed Instruments of Encreasing it;

and who are influenced by the Laudable, and Pure, and Spiritual Ambition of *shining as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever.*

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever, Amen.

To

Lor
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To the Right Reverend and Right Honourable NATHANAEL Lord Crewe,
Lord Bishop of *Durham* and Baron
of *Stene*,

My LORD,

YOUR Command, that this Sermon should be Published, is as full a Testimony of the Prevalency of True Zeal and Candour in Your Lordship, as the Publication of it is, of a Readiness in me to Obey Your Commands. For the Warmth of Your Pious Regard to the Greatness of the Subject, made You Overlook the Weakness of the Discourse. The very Mention of so Important an Article, was sufficient to put Your Lordship upon Exercising and Filling Your Soul, with Your Own Inlarged and Moving Notions of it; insomuch, that You were not at Leisure to Recollect, that the Holy Flame, which You felt in Your Breast, was of Your Own Raising. And Hence it easily came to pass, that in the Heat of Thought, Your Lordship Generously Approved of my Discourse, which only gave Occasion to Your Own exalted Sentiments, as if it had indeed Supplied You with 'em.

If This had not been Plainly the case, Your Lordship's Approbation might have proved a Dangerous Trial of my Humility. And the Reader will easily Agree with me in This, when I have told him, for his Satisfaction, what I have Lately observed, with a mixture of Wonder and Delight

my self, That All the Faculties of Your Noble Mind are still as Perfect and Intire, as they can be well Imagin'd to have been, even in those Remote Times, when You were, for many years together, Particularly Distinguish'd in a Court, which did as Justly, and as Nicely, and as Constantly Distinguish men of Accurate and Polite Understanding, as any Court that the English Nation ever saw. And yet the Sense of such Engaging Favours and Honours, was not Able to shake Your Lordship, either with Vanity, whilst they were Present, or, with Uneasiness, when they were Past.

Your Example will be a Lasting Evidence, that 'tis no Impracticable Thing, to Reconcile those Powerful Temptations to Indulgence and Ease, which press Hardest upon men of Quality and a State of Affluence, with Strictness and Purity of Life; or, a True Spirit of Discipline and Government, with all the Endearments of Affability and Good Breeding; or, the Integrity and Simplicity of a Christian, with the Arts and Glories of a Court.

Such a Faithful and Wise Conduct as This, in all the Active parts of Life, hath made those succeeding periods of it, Seasons of Refreshment to Your Lordship, which are, Commonly, with Others, the Subject of Complaint. You are now Blessed with all the Soft, and Serene, and Satisfactory Reflections, which Tully ascribes to Cato's Age; and those Improved and Inrich'd, to such a Degree by full Streams of Consolation Derived from the Gospel, as the Virtuous Hea-then could not conceive.

But

But, when men have once given up their Hearts, Intirely, to any Thing, their Pursuits of it do seldom Keep any Bounds. Your Lordship cannot Still Forbear to Increase Your Accumulated Stores of Spiritual Delight; still making new Way with Eagerness, in the Course of Piety, and still Multiplying Your Numbers of Good Works, which are Already too Great to be easily Told.

I beseech Your Lordship to forgive my taking this Opportunity of Glancing upon a Few, of the Numerous Reasons I have, for accounting Your Lordship's Patronage an Abundant Honour. And I must beg leave to Add my Humble Thanks, in a Particular manner, for this Great Circumstance, in the Generosity of Your Lordship's Favours to me, that they were Unsought for, as well as Undeserved by,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most Humble,

and Obedient

Chaplain and Servant,

Lincoln's-Inn,
Nov. 29, 1720,

WILL. LUPTON.

S E R M O N VI.

The Omniscience of God.

I SAMUEL II. 3.

The Lord is a God of Knowledge.

THIS Divine Attribute, which gives Laws to all the Counsels and Dispensations of God, is a Main Spring of Religion amongst Men. For our Belief of it is Apt to introduce the Highest Reverence towards our Maker, and the Strictest Watchfulness over our Selves. And 'tis the Want of this Belief, that strikes off Mens Hopes and Fears, and sets them Loose from the notions of Duty. For how should they Hope to be Rewarded for their Obedience, or, be Afraid of Suffering for their Sins, fo

so long as they do not Apprehend, that any Notice is taken, either of the One, or of the Other.

To this purpose, the *Psalmist* represents Wicked Men, as Supporting themselves, under their Sins, by means of this Disbelief, and saying, * *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* Thus do they Devise for themselves a Shelter without Safety, and lay the Foundations of their Hope and Comfort, in Falshood and Folly. *For the Lord is a God of Knowledge.*

In discoursing on this Subject, I shall

I. *Consider the Extent, and Perfection of Knowledge in God, and*

II. *Draw some Practical Observations from it.*

First, Let us consider the Extent and Perfection of Knowledge in God. And in the First place 'tis observable, that his Knowledge does extend it self to All his *Creatures.* And the Acknowledgment of This is a Direct Consequence of our Belief that there is a God, and that He is

* Psal. xciv. 7.

our Creatour. For 'tis not to be Supposed, or Imagin'd, that the Contriver and Author of our Beings can be Ignorant of them. And hence 'tis observable, that neither the Wonderful Numbers, nor Differences of Creatures can Prevent, or Obstruct God's Knowledge of every Particular amongst them. For, if every Single creature be as Certainly and Properly Produced and Constituted, by his Voluntary and Positive Act, as if that creature Alone had been produced by him; Then every Single Being is as Distinctly, and Fully, and perfectly Known by him, as if That Single Being were the Only object of his Knowledge.

After the Works of the Creation were Finished, the First Remark made upon them was, that *God Saw every thing that he had made*, that he took Special Cognizance of the Nature and Constitution, the State and Circumstances of All created Beings: And, every Thing that he had made being Disposed and Order'd by his *Wisdom*, That Knowledge of his, whereby he applies the best Means to the best Ends, Therefore the next Thing Remark'd

was,

was, this Judgment which the Creatour passed upon the whole Work of Creation, *And behold it was very good.*

The *Images* of Things were all Distinct, and Fair, and Perfect in the Divine Mind, before they were made. Creation was only the Actual Execution of God's Eternal Designs, That External Action, whereby he gave Existence to Beings, in an Exact and Intire Conformity to the *Ideas*, which he had of them, from Everlasting, within Himself. And hence appears the Perfection, as well as the Extent of that Knowledge, which God hath of his Creatures. For, as They are, in Effect, the Transcripts and Resemblances of his own Conceptions, His Consciousness of the One, must be the consummate Knowledge of the Other. Since there is not a Figure, or Line in any Body throughout the Compass of the Visible World; not a Principle, or Faculty, or Power, in any Being, Visible or Invisible, but what was first Adjusted in its Grand Exemplar, the Mind of God; and since his Conceptions are Indelible and Immutable, Therefore the View of his own Conceptions, is at once
a most

a most Accurate and Intimate Survey of every Created Being.

And as the Creatour hath the Complete Knowledge of Them, in their Original, the Eternal *Ideas* of them within Himself; so is he, in his own Essence, Immediately Present with every one of them. And therefore the Nature and Operations, and all the Circumstances of every Being are continually under His Inspection, continually Unfolded and Displayed before him.

So Firm and Sure are the Foundations of this great Truth delivered by the *Apostle*, Hebr. iv. 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his Sight: But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do,*

And to these General Reasons of God's Knowledge may be reduced those passages of Scripture which represent his Particular and Perfect Knowledge of Human Affairs. Such are those Texts, which testify either

1st, His Knowledge of our *Outward Actions*, or

2^{dly},

2dly, His Knowledge of our *Hearts and Thoughts*, or

3dly, His *Foreknowledge*, or, his Knowledge of *Future Events*, even of Those which are properly contingent, and depend upon the Voluntary Resolutions and Determinations of Free Agents.

1st, The Infallible Word of God testifies his Knowledge of our *Outward Actions*. Thus we are taught, *Job xxxiv. 21. His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*; and in the words immediately following the Text, *By him Actions are weighed*: And *Pf. cxxxix. 3. Thou art acquainted with all my ways*. Our Power of Acting is communicated by Him, and therefore our Exercise and Applications of that Power, which intirely Depends upon him, must be perfectly Known to him. And because He is always Immediately Present with us, 'tis as impossible for us to Act without his Knowledge, as to Subsist without his Support.

2dly, The Scripture testifies God's certain Knowledge of our *Hearts and Thoughts*. Upon this Principle Holy *David*

vid builds his Exhortations to Solomon,
 * *Know thou the God of thy father, and
 serve him with a perfect heart, and
 with a willing mind; for the Lord search-
 eth all hearts, and understandeth all the
 Imaginations of the Thoughts.*

Our Discernment cannot reach the Se-
 crets of Mens Minds; and therefore, *by
 their fruits ye shall know them*, is the
 necessary Rule of our Judgment, as well
 as of our Charity. But God's Knowledge
 of our Hearts does not Depend upon, nor
 Want the Evidence of our outward be-
 haviour. He sees Them Directly, as they
 are in Themselves: The Soul being in his
 Immediate Presence, as well as the Bo-
 dy, He observes the operations of the One,
 as Accurately as the Other, our *Thoughts*
 as Distinctly as our *Actions*.

3dly, The Scripture † testifies the *Fore-
 knowledge* of God, or, his Knowledge of
Future Events, even of Those which
 are properly Contingent, and depend up-
 on the Voluntary Determinations of Free
 Agents. Nothing is more Evident, than

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. † Dan. ii. 28. Isa. xliii. 9. — xlvii. 10.

that God Foresaw, and Foretold the Bondage of his People in *Ægypt*, the Condemnation and Death of our Blessed Saviour, and the Circumstances of them. And indeed the Prophets are so many Uncontestable Witnesses of God's Foreknowledge.

There is nothing *Accidental*, with respect to God, either in the works of Creation, or Providence. We should throw the Notion of a God quite out of the Question, if we should conceive the World either to be Made, or to be Govern'd by Chance. And if it be under a Regular, and Wise Government, it follows, that there must be *Prescience* in the Governour, and that his *Permissions*, upon which Much depends in the Government of the World, are no more Floating and Casual, than his Direct *Appointments* are, but are all settled and fixed by Infinite Wisdom; And therefore he hath in Himself as perfect Images of Those Operations of Free Agents, and of their Effects, which he will purely Permit, as of those Others, which he will Direct and Promote.

And

And yet, his Foreknowledge does lay no *Necessity* upon the Agents, or Interfere with the Liberty of their Wills and Actions; Which (to avoid more Nice and Minute Disquisition) we may be satisfied in from this Single consideration, That the Liberty or Freedom of *God's Own Will*, and of *His* Actions, is Perfect and Intire, notwithstanding that they are *Foreknown* by him. For it seems plain, that his Foreknowledge of such Events, as depend upon the Wills and Actions of *Men*, is no more Repugnant to the Freedom of their Wills, than his Foreknowledge of any thing, which he Himself does, and which, if He pleaseth, may be let Alone, is Repugnant to the Freedom of his *Own Will*.

Men of Speculation have sometimes perplexed themselves, under this Argument, with a variety of Thoughts, which they could not Easily reconcile with one another; And it would be no Wonder, if our Notions of so Abstruse a point, should not be Adequate and Intire. Therefore I would conclude this Head with this Remark, That when a Fundamen-
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tal Truth is established upon Undeniable Principles, Reason requires that we should stedfastly adhere to that Truth; though some Difficulties do arise, in relation to it, which we cannot perfectly account for.

God's Foreknowledge is expressly taught in Holy Scripture, and is likewise the Necessary and Unavoidable Consequence of the Natural notions we have of God, consider'd as the Governour of the World. And when we are convinced of so great a Truth, by so Full an Evidence; if we should either Reject, or Doubt of it, because we find it attended with Difficulties, which we cannot explain, or account for, we should Therefore Act Unreasonably, because we should give up something which we Do understand, for the sake of something else, which we do Not. The Difficulty of some points, relating to a Truth so Firmly Establish'd, ought not to break in upon our Certain Knowledge of the Thing, but be charg'd to the account of our own Ignorance.

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And the same Rule of Reason and of Duty is to be observed in relation to the Congruity and Consistency of one Truth with another. Thus, when the Certainty both of *Foreknowledge* in God, and of *Free Will* in Man, is evident both from Scripture and Reason, the same Reason requires us to Depend upon it, that these Truths, Each of which we are Plainly Assured of, are Consistent with one another, whether we can clear up the Difficulties of that Consistency, or not.

Moreover, 'tis observable that the least Surmise of Infringement upon the *Freedom* of Man, by the *Foreknowledge* of God, is on This account also to be Abandon'd and Despised, because it would be manifestly Inconsistent with the Divine *Goodness* and *Justice*. And every Difficulty or Objection may well be thought Vain and Groundless, which plainly Interferes with the Natural Notions of a God.

So Distinct and Exact, so Full and Complete is God's Knowledge of the whole Creation. But still, his Know-
ledge

ledge does not Stop Here; The *Extent* of it is not *Determin'd* by the Numbers and Varieties of Created Beings, Great and Marvellous as they are, but is Truly and Properly Unbounded and Infinite. And This also appears from our Natural Notions of him, as well as from the Testimony given of it, by his Holy Spirit, in the * Scriptures. It is evident from Both, that *he is Perfect in Knowledge*, and that *he knoweth all Things*, and therefore His Knowledge must be of equal extent with his own *Being*; And consequently His *Knowledge* must be Exclusive of all Bounds, because his *Being* it self is exclusive of them. For as a Finite Understanding cannot comprehend an Infinite Object; so it must be granted, that an Understanding, which does comprehend an Infinite Object, cannot It Self, for that very Reason, be Finite.

God's Knowledge of his own *Power* must be Infinite, because his Power is Confessedly so. Whatsoever the Differences, or Extravagancies of Mens o-

* Job. xxxvi. 4. 1 John iii. 20. Psal. cxlvii. 5.

pinions may be, about an *Actual* Plurality of Worlds; 'tis universally agreed that he Can create Many worlds, if he pleaseth, and that, if he should create ever so great a number, his Capacity of Adding to that number would still be the Same, as now it is; His Power would still be as far from being Exhausted, as Before. And we cannot Doubt, that his *Knowledge* of such Power in himself is Infinite, or, Imagine that it is Different from the Knowledge, which he Eternally had of his Power to create This world, in any other respect than This, that his *Will* had Determin'd to exert his Power, in the Actual production of This World; Which Consideration does not relate to the Pure *Knowledge* of Power, as an Essential Attribute of the Divine Nature.

And, that we may carry on this Sacred and Sublime Subject a little further, let us look up to God's Knowledge of Another Attribute, which he hath Determin'd to demonstrate in an Infinite Variety of *Effects*; and Those such as may Justly challenge the First place in
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our Thoughts and Contemplations, because They are of the Nearest Concernment to us. For as the *Goodness* of God is in it self Inexhaustible, so will the Actual *Effects* of it, in the Supply of our Happiness, be unlimited and Infinite. And must not that Knowledge be Boundless, which at once comprehends the Infinite Effects of God's Goodness? And the same Observation might be applied to the Acts or Exercise of Divine *Power* also; without which, the Acts of Goodness would not be Infinite, as they will most Undoubtedly be.

Since therefore a Finite Understanding cannot comprehend an Infinite Object; since the Nature and Attributes of God are Infinite, and since he does Perfectly understand his own Nature and Attributes; 'tis Hence, as well as from the express Testimony of his Holy Word, Evident and Clear, that his Knowledge is Infinite.

When such Truths as this are spoken of, as *Evident* and *Clear*, 'tis not to be Imagin'd, that such Clearness is to be understood of the *Mode*, or *Manner* of

the Things spoken of; For if we were to try the Strength of our Thinking, with the *Manner* of Things, we should quickly fall from our *Clearness*, even in our Thoughts of any the lowest *Created* Being. An Apprehension of the *Certainty* of Things is very Different from that Apprehension, which relates to the *Modes* of them. The first may be very Clear and Convincing, though the Latter be ever so Confused, Imperfect, or Obscure. The *Manner* of God's Knowledge of Himself, and of all other Things, is not to be Conceived by Us; But, that notwithstanding, the *Certainty* of it, and of the Consequences drawn from it, is Clear beyond Exception. Though we cannot comprehend the Mode of God's *Essence*, or of any of his *Attributes*; yet such are our Natural Notions of the Things themselves, and of their Necessary Relations to one another, that we are Plainly and Fully persuaded of their *Certainty*, and of the Truth of those Arguments, which are built upon it.

This Distinction betwixt our Conceptions of the *Certainty*, and of the *Man-*

ner of Things, seems necessary to Prevent our running into the Errour of Those, who, because they cannot comprehend the Mode of God's Nature and Attributes, are therefore wont to Avoid and Neglect those *Thoughts* of God, which ought to be the Daily Employment of their Minds. And this brings me to the

II. *Second* thing proposed, namely, to draw some Practical Observations from what hath been said. And

1st. Let the Perfection of God's Knowledge raise our utmost Admiration, and Honour, and Reverence towards Him, and the utmost Humility in our Thoughts of our Selves. There is Nothing Beyond the reach of His Knowledge, and scarce Any thing Within the reach of Ours. The Conceptions of Our Minds are Obscure and Confused, Inadequate and Erroneous, and such as they are, Raised with Difficulty, and Easily Lost: His are Clear and Distinct, Adequate and Infalible, Constant and Immutable. His Knowledge, even of his own Infinite Essence and Perfections, is Positive and

Complete: Our Notions, even of a Finite Spirit, are chiefly Negative, and very Defective; though indeed the *Existence* of Spirit is Undeniably deducible from *Reason*, as well as abundantly attested in his Holy Word. When we apply our Minds, even to Bodily Substances, our Knowledge creeps slowly on, through the Tract of Properties and Effects: His Knowledge at once Explores and runs through the Essences and first Principles of all Things. Let us therefore be ever Diffident of our own Weak, and Narrow, and Imperfect Conceptions, and submit all our Thoughts, by a Stedfast *Faith* to the Perfection of Truth, which is plainly Revealed by Him, and may Therefore be Fully Depended on by Us. Let us be ever Deeply Affected with a Sense of our own Infirmities, and Adore that Fountain of Exquisite Knowledge in Him, from which we hope to have Intire Knowledge Hereafter Derived upon our Selves.

2^{ly}, The Thoughts of God's *Omniscience* should Introduce into our Minds an Awful Sense of Him, Fear, and Solicitude,

licitude, and Care, in the Conduct of our Lives. Holy *David*, who gives this Testimony of his Faith, *There is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether*, does also give this Suitable Testimony of his Piety, *I am utterly purposed, that my mouth shall not offend*. As the Doctrine of God's Omniscience is, in it self, a Fundamental Truth, it ought to be a Fundamental Principle of Action. There must be great Necessity of Strictness in That Behaviour, which is under the Immediate Inspection of our Judge. We had need keep up a Continual Dread of the works of Darkness, when we are Continually Seen and Observed by the Father of Lights.

To run on in Life, without a Constant, Moving Sense of God's Presence with us, is, in Effect, to live as without God in the world. This is the Great, Governing Direction, which God gave to *Abraham*, *I am the Almighty God, walk BEFORE ME, and be thou perfect*. The Perfection of our Duty to God depends much upon the Perfection of our Regards to his Knowledge of us. Those who

who always walk, as in His Sight, are always steering the Proper course to Eternal Life.

3^{ly}, And more Particularly; This Doctrine of God's *Omniscience* should render us very Strict, and Careful in the *Worship* of him. We may possibly Deceive One Another in this Point. A Devout *Posture* and a Serious *Look* may pass Currently and Laudably amongst Us for Devotion and Reverence. Indeed These Things are the Proper *Indications*, and *Tokens* of Devotion, and do so Naturally arise from a Devout Spirit, that they cannot easily be Prevented. If they were not the Proper and Natural Effects and Evidences of a Truly Religious Mind, they would not be Affected and Counterfeited, as they are, by Hypocritical and Designing Men.

But when these Marks of Piety are without the Substance of it, they are Unprofitable and Vain. *The Lord seeth not as Man seeth, but looketh on the HEART* and Thoughts, and if there be no Piety, or Devotion There, our Appearance before him is an Abomination unto

to him. The Affected and False Seriousness and Sanctity of a *Pharisee* may possibly compass his End and Design, may possibly secure him of the Approbation and Applause of *Men*; But, for all That, his Affectation and Falseness will turn his very Prayers into Sin. No Sly Artifices and Devices can Escape the Knowledge of *God*, but will bring down his Vengeance upon us. We must take care, that our Sacrifices be such as He Requires, if we would have them such as He will Accept. Attention of Mind, and Sincerity of Heart, and Fervency of Spirit are Necessary to Recommend our Prayers to Him, who Clearly sees, How far our Words are answerable to our Meaning, Whether our Outward Confessions do proceed from true Contrition, Whether our Thanksgivings do flow from a Grateful Soul, and whether our Requests are Earnest enough to deserve his Regard.

4thly, God's *Omniscience* is a Reason of believing, that we shall be Tried, in the Future Judgment, with much greater Strictness than we are Apt to Imagine, and
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under many Articles, which we are not wont to consider. His Knowledge Fully Comprehends and Faithfully Retains every moving Conviction of our own Minds, which we have at any time Stifled or Rejected; every Holy Resolution, which we have at any time Violated; every of those Terrors of Conscience, which we have Audaciously Diverted and thrown off; All the Endearing Assurances, Instigations and Restraints of the *Holy Spirit*, which we have Stubbornly Withstood or Suppressed, and every instance of our Frustrating the Wise Ends of his *Providence*, whether in Adversity or Prosperity, which we have seldom taken Notice of, or Generally Forgot.

All our Fixed Purposes of Sinning, though we could not put them in Execution; All the instances of our Irreverence towards God and his Holy Word, whether Publick or Private; Every Attempt or Design, either to Oppose or Dissemble, to Misrepresent or Wrest the Truth, how Plausible soever such Attempts or Designs may be; Every
very

very instance of our Endeavours to *please Men*, by Complying with them, or giving them Countenance and Encouragement, in their Deviations either from Truth, or Virtue; The Abuse or Neglect even of our *Capacities* to do Good; The Mischief we have done by our Examples, either in the Commissions of Sin, whereby the Dominion of Sin hath been Propagated and Inlarged, how far by Our means Propagated and Inlarged, we *cannot tell, God knoweth*; or, even in the *Omissions* of Duty, as of the Publick Worship, or the *Neglect* (much more the *Abuse*) of the Sabbath, whereby many Other Persons, how many we *cannot tell, God knoweth*, have been led into the Like Omissions and Neglects; These and all other Circumstances of our State and Condition and the Consequences of them, are now continually and Particularly Seen and Noted, and will hereafter be Particularly brought to account by God, who is *Greater than our heart and knoweth all things*. And when all the circumstances of Aggravation against us, are Particularly charged

charged upon us, how shall we sink under a Weight of Shame and Confusion of Face?

Indeed the Power of *Imagination* itself can now scarce represent to us that Piercing Sense of *Shame*, which, in Proportion to our Guilt, will wound our Souls, in that Great and Solemn Day, when all our Actions and Circumstances shall be Unvailed by the *God of Knowledge*, and Observed by the General Assembly of Angels and Men. It is not Evident from the Scripture, that even Those persons shall escape the *Shame* of their Sins in the Judgment, who may escape *Condemnation* to the Eternal Punishment of them. 'Tis not easy to conceive, how Their Sins shall be so Particularly Examin'd, as the Scripture represents, without having all those Sins Exposed and laid Open in the Judgment, or, how the Mercy of God shall be so illustriously displayed in the *Forgiveness* of their Sins, without the Manifestation and View of those Sins, which are to be Examin'd, before they are Forgiven. And when *Infinite Knowledge* is to account for

for our Iniquities; the *Occasions* and *Degrees* of our Shame must be much Greater, than we our Selves could Before Apprehend.

5^{ly}, and Lastly; The *Omniscience* of God yields Proper matter of *Comfort* to all Good men. They are from This Principle Assured, that All their Duties, whether Open or Secret, are now Punctually Observed and Regarded by the *most High*, and will therefore be Undoubtedly followed with an Abundant and Eternal Reward. And they are, upon This Principle, Cheer'd and Refreshed with the Thoughts, that all *Misrepresentations* and *Suspensions* of their Virtue and Goodness, which are now as Difficult to be Born as to be Avoided, will, in due Time, be taken off, and their Sincerity set in its Proper Light.

Their Scrupulous and Conscientious Discharge of their Offices and Employments; Their Serious and Constant Endeavours to avoid *all Appearance of Evil*; Their Faithful expressions of
Zeal

Zeal and of *Charity*; Their *Constancy* and *Fervency* in Prayer, and all their other Actions and Demeanour, which are now wont to be Charged with the Imputations of Pretence and Singularity, shall then be clear'd up, and their *Outward* Actions and Appearances will be plainly found to have been the True Representations, and Effects of *Real, Inward* Goodness. Therefore at Present, their Proper Business is a Patient waiting for the Time, when these Blemishes shall be taken off, and the Man, who was Truly Good, shall Undenially appear to have been So.

Because we are exhorted to *Beware of Wolves coming in Sheeps clothing*, Therefore in some Mens Candid way of Thinking, every one, who *Appears* to be Good, must be concluded to be Evil. There are Persons in the World so Intirely Corrupted, that they are under an Utter Indisposition and *Aversion* to Goodness; And this their Indisposition makes them think, that all *Evidences* of Goodness in Others must be

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Counterfeit, because they have no notion of Any Man's being *Really* so very Good, as some Men *Appear* to be. Hence it is, that Good men have so many Severe Censures passed upon Them. But, in the Last *Judgment*, all these Points will be Adjusted by the *All-Seeing God*, who hath all along Observed and Approved his Faithful Servants *in Secret*, and shall Then Justify, and Reward them *Openly*. And how can we conceive this to be done, without a Particular Manifestation of that *Real Goodness*, which had all along Before been Misrepresented and Traduced?

Welcome the Day, when this Hard Fate shall be Finally Superseded and Over-ruled; when the Beauties of that Innocence, which Before had been Condemned or Suspected, shall be made Manifest as the Light: And Blessed the Man, whose Case will bear so Full a Light, as it must Then Appear in; who, after all the Discoveries which *Omniscience* itself can make, shall be Crowned with

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Approbation, and Honour, and Eternal Life.

*To God the Father, God the Son, and
God the Holy Ghost, be all Ho-
nour, Praise, and Thanksgiving,
both Now, and for Evermore.
Amen.*

SERMON

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SERMON VII.

A Fast Sermon.

DEUTER. XXVIII. 21.

The Lord shall make the Pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee—

SUCH are our Present Apprehensions, and such Cause have we to be very Apprehensive, of That great Evil, which is here denounced, that the Sound of the Words in the Text may well make *both the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle*. The Danger of this Severe Judgment, which we dread, is not very far from us; And the Reasons, which, in Respect of Religion, we have of dreading it, too Nearly

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concern

concern us: For it cannot be Denied, and ought, with all possible Humility, to be Confessed, that it would be Just in God, *to bring Evil upon us, even the year of our Visitation.*

Ought we not therefore to be Serious and Thoughtful, Studious and Sollicitous, Impartial and Particular, in Considering and Applying the Reasons of God's Inflicting the Punishment here Denounced? And These are observable from the 15th ver. *It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his Commandments and his Statutes, which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee;* And to This is subjoyned an Enumeration of the Various *Curses*, including That in the Text, which their Disobedience would Infallibly bring upon them, and which their Obedience would effectually Prevent.

Under this Relation of the Text to the Context, the Subject and the Occasion of this Discourse do require our
Atten-

Attentive Consideration of these two points;

I. *First, The Rule and Measure of our Duty, under a Proper Sense of the Threatning in the Text; and*

II. *Secondly, The Punishment, which may be expected, if our Duty be not Fulfilled.*

I. *The Rule and Measure of our Duty, under a proper Sense of the Threatning in the Text.* And as the Sins of the Nation are assigned for the Cause of God's Inflicting the Punishment Denounced against it; our Duty, under a Proper Sense of the Threatning, depends especially, upon Two Things;

1st, *A Sincere and True Repentance for our own Sins.*

2^{dly}, *Our Detesting and Bewailing the Sins of other Persons, and Deprecating that Divine Vengeance, which may Justly fall upon the Kingdom, on account of Their Sins, or, our Own.*

I. *Our Sincere and True Repentance for our own Sins.* The Necessity and Efficacy of True Repentance, are Fully represented, in this Moving Account of

the Condescending and Compassionate Regard, which the Author of our Beings, hath to our Happiness: * *Repent, and turn your selves from all your transgressions; so Iniquity shall not be your ruine. Why will ye die? I have no Pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn your selves and live ye.* God is Abundant in Mercy and Com-miseration towards Mankind; But still, Mercy it Self cannot skreen us from his Wrath, if we will not be prevailed upon, to fulfil the *Conditions* of Mercy. Though he hath given us This Character of Himself, for our Encouragement and Consolation; that *his Compassions fail not*; † yet, that we may not Groundlessly Presume upon Them, or, conceive Them to extend unto Persons who are not Proper Objects of Them, He gives this Remarkable Warning to Incorrigible Sinners; *I will dash them one against another; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them* ‡. Disobedience is the Only Means of Forfeiting, and Sin-

* Ezek. xviii. 30, 31, 32.

† Lament. iii. 22.

‡ Jerem. xlii. 14.

cere Repentance the only Means of Regaining his Favour.

He, whose Hand directs Those Arrows of Death, which we are now afraid of, is Distinctly observing, how Serious, or Superficial we are, in endeavouring to prevent their being levell'd at Us; and our Fate will be Determin'd by our Behaviour. It is not the Mournful Voice, or the Dejected Looks, but the True and Deep Contrition of our Hearts, that can Avert the Impending Judgments of God from us. *Is not this the Fast that I have chosen, to loose the Bands of Wickedness*?* Our Conversion is the Proper Measure of our Hopes; and the Proportion of our Fears, is to be taken from our Impenitence. 'Tis left to our Choice, whether we will abandon our Sins, or our Safety; whether we will be *vessels of wrath*, or, *vessels of mercy*; whether we will be Defended, or Destroyed by the Almighty.

How shall we then be Particular enough in Recollecting, or Earnest and Vehement enough in Detesting and Bewailing, the

* Isa. lviii, 6.

Sins and Follies of our Lives, and the Defects which may be chargeable even upon our Former Exercises of Repentance itself? If it be found, after all Past Instances of Humiliation, that Worldly Men have still Relapsed into their Eager Love and Pursuits of the *things of the World*; The Drunkard and Glutton, into his Intemperance and Excess; The Impure, into his Pollutions; the Proud and Supercilious, into his wonted High Esteem of Himself, and Contempt, or Neglect of Others; The Passionate and Boisterous, into their Usual Forgetfulness of Themselves, and Indulgence of their Tumultuous Passions; The Slothful and Negligent in the Duties of Religion, into their former Laziness and Remissness; the Hypocrite, into his Old Tricks of False-colouring and Misrepresentation, retiring within his Cover'd Ways, and running the Fatal Rounds of Pretence and Disguise; The Factious, Prejudiced, and Partial, into his Inveterate Spirit of Faction, Prejudice and Division; The Uncharitable and Unmerciful, into his Customary, Impious Disregard to the Miseries of his Brethen;

Brethren: If in These, or, any other Instances of Iniquity, it be found, that, after all our Fastings and Humiliations, Sighs and Tears, Vows and Resolutions, we are still the very Same Men, have still run Back into the Dominion of the very Same Passions, and Allowance of the Same Vicious Practices, as Before, we may Hence draw this Afflicting and Woful Consequence for our selves, That we are still Obnoxious to the Indignation of our Maker, we are still to Begin the great Work of our Repentance Afresh, and to Humble our selves before God, even for the Inefficacy and Unfruitfulness of our Former Humiliations before Him.

Whosoever is in this Unhappy Case, should obey the *Prophet's* Injunction, and Indeed *Rent his Heart*, under this Reflexion, That All he hath hitherto done, signifies nothing; For All does signify nothing, if he hath still fallen off from his Holy Purposes, if he hath still returned to his former Sinful Courses, and be still Swayed and Governed by his Unruly Passions, of what Kind soever they be. Let
every

every such Person mourn, as One who will not be Comforted; Will not? Cannot be, otherwise, comforted, than under the Hopes of God's Mercy, upon the Condition of that Repentance, which is still to be Perform'd, and which he must Begin with the Profoundest Sorrow, if he would have it Terminate in the Perfection of Joy.

Let us no longer dare to Trifle with God, and Deceive our Selves. Nothing can render Him Propitious to Us, but the Faithful Discharge of our Duty to Him. May therefore the Sincerity of our Repentance effectually recommend us to his Mercy and Favour This Day, and may every succeeding Day of our Lives be a New Proof of That Sincerity.

2. *'Tis our Duty, to Detest and Bewail the Sins of Other Persons, and to Deprecate that Divine Vengeance, which may justly fall upon the Kingdom, on account of Their Sins, or, our Own.*

In a Future State indeed, no Body shall be hurt by any Man's Sins, but Himself. The Proper Weight of Punishment Due to every Man's Guilt, will be laid

laid upon his own Person Alone. But this Rule does not hold good, in all the Distributions of Punishment, in This State. Nations and Communities, as such, do finally Dissolve and Cease in This World; And therefore, as such, they are to be Rewarded and Punished Here, or not at all. And, when God sends a General Calamity upon a Nation, Those who have Provoked him to it, are not the Only Sufferers by it; Their *Neighbours* are distressed, as well as *Themselves*, who have been the *Cause* of such Distress. And This is One Weighty Reason of our Detesting and Bewailing other Mens Sins, and of Proving the Reality of this Detestation and Sorrow, by bearing our Testimony against them, upon all Proper Occasions: 'Tis a Reason abundantly Sufficient to justify our being so highly concern'd for the Iniquities and Abominations of our Fellow-Citizens and Countrymen, as to testify that Concern, no less by Exhorting or Reproving them, as Circumstances Require, than by Mourning and Praying for them.

But

But so Injudicious, and Injurious are Wicked Men, as to account such Reproof and Exhortations, the Effects of a Meddling and Impertinent Spirit. In the Defence even of their *Blasphemy*, their *Burlesques* upon God and Religion, and, to use St. Jude's Words, *of all their hard Speeches, which Ungodly Sinners have spoken against the Lord*, they are wont to express Themselves, in much the same way, as Those Haughty Scorners, who are introduced by the *Psalmist*, saying, ** With our Tongue will we prevail; our Lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* They are apt to say, and to say it with *Virulency* enough, That no Man hath any thing to do with Them, or Their Behaviour: And whosoever Concerns himself with Them, is Petulant, and Affected, and Phantastical.

Happy indeed would it be for Humane Society, if the *Truth* of this their Observation were but equal to the *Acrimony* of it. But the Advantages, or the Misfortunes, the Joys, or the Sorrows of all

* Psal. xii. 4.

the Members of a Community, are, in many Respects, and on many Accounts, so Mix'd and Complicated, that in the *Political*, as well as the *Natural* Body, when *one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it*. Where is the Petulance, or, the Impertinence, of Claiming to ourselves that Concern with Impious Men, or, those Relations to them, which we should be glad to Shake off and Disannull. The Case is so Plain, that it needs not to be Largely Illustrated, and so Afflicting, that it cannot be Neglected, That our Relations to Them are, in This State, Indissoluble; That we must have Concern for Them, unless we can be Unconcern'd for our Selves; That their Rebellions against God are Apt to call down Storms of Divine Fury upon the Kingdom, and, that an Universal Calamity will Affect Us in Common with Themselves.

The Deliverance of Righteous *Lot* from the Destruction of *Sodom*, was *Extraordinary*; And of such Uncommon and Extraordinary Instances, the Spirit of God speaks in the *xivth Ch. of Ezek.*
with

with Relation to the several Kinds of National Judgments, and Particularly That, which should Now move our *Piety*, as well as our *Fear*: *If I send a Pestilence into that Land, and pour out my Fury upon it in Blood, to cut off from it Man and Beast; though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord, they shall deliver neither Son, nor Daughter; they shall but deliver their own Souls by their Righteousness*: Though God should think fit to deliver such Extraordinary Persons, in an Extraordinary Manner; yet even their Families, even the Dearest Branches of them, their Sons and their Daughters, should fall in the Common Destruction. And, in all Ordinary Cases, the Great Instruments of God's Vengeance, *the Sword, the Famine, and the Pestilence*, seem to break in, Promiscuously, upon Virtuous, and Vicious Men. If any Person be Preserved, in the very middle of Danger, by the special Interposition of Heaven, from these Great Evils; yet do They plainly Ravage and Consume the Inhabitants of the Land, without visible Difference or Discrimination.

So

So far as it is thus Proper and *Natural* for us, to Detest and Bewail the Sins of our Brethren, because, we, as well as Themselves, are Thereby in Danger of being visited by *Publick* Calamity, in Danger of being Involved with them and by them, in a General Desolation; so far, the Propriety and Obligations of this Duty do chiefly depend upon the *Innate* Principle of *Self-preservation*.

But we are under Further Engagements to it, as it is the necessary Consequence of that Love of our *Neighbours* Themselves, which is Indispensably required at our hands. Our Affectionate Concern for them, will constrain us to Abhor and Bemoan those their Follies and Impieties, which must carry them, through the *National* Punishment, if they should bring it upon us, into Endless Misery; whilst Others, who may undergo the same Fate with them Here, shall pass, through the Doleful Vale of Death, into a Glorious Life.

And there are still Other, and Superior Reasons, of this Duty, grounded upon the zealous Concern we are Bound
to

to have for *God's Glory*, which is the Ultimate end of the whole Creation. The Royal Prophet gives a Rule of Duty to Us, under this Pathetic account of his Fulfilling it Himself, in Both the parts of it, Deep Sorrow for the violations of God's Honour, and an Utter Abhorrence of them: * *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy Law.* † *Do not I hate them that hate thee; and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? yea I hate them right sore; even as though they were mine Enemies.* 'Tis impossible to be Warm in the Love of God, and to be Cool and Unconcern'd, under a Sense of the Dishonour offer'd to Him, by our Brethren.

There is yet One Reason more of this Duty to be taken notice of, the Hope of its *Acceptance* with God, when 'tis added to a true Repentance for our own Sins. For when we are so far from Espousing, or Approving the Prevailing Corruptions and Iniquities, that we cannot bear the very Thoughts of them; when our An-

* Psal. cxix. 136. † Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22.

guish occasion'd by them is Pungent and Lasting; when our real Abhorrence of them introduceth, as it will certainly introduce, the utmost Opposition to them, according to our Circumstances and Capacities; when we Humbly acknowledge, that the severest Publick Judgments would be their Just Consequence and Reward, and, when our Deprecations of such Judgments are Sincere and Fervent; we do, at once Demonstrate our Ardent Love of God and Charity to our Brethren, our Faith, our Sincerity, our Humility, our Affiance, our Zeal, Dispositions and Qualifications, which God, Principally, Requires, and must therefore be Highly Acceptable to him. And hence it follows, that if we should Happily *Abound* with Persons, who do truly Detest, and Bewail, and oppose themselves to, the Sins of the Times, and are therefore Adorned with All these Heavenly Dispositions, we may reasonably Hope, that they, through the Intercession of *Christ*, may prevail for Mercy with God, *that we Perish not.*

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It is not for Man to Determine, or Imagine, what Number of such Holy Supplicants may suffice to Avert the Wrath of God, that he may *spare the place, for their sakes*. But we are certain, from the Scriptures, that he Particularly Regards the Duties of such Faithful and Devout, and Zealous Servants, as Oppose themselves to the Iniquities of their Countrey; And Therefore it is, that, after he had charged the *Jews* with all their *Abominations*, before he Proceeds to execute his Vindictive Justice upon Them, he gives in this Observation, * *I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the Gap before me, for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none*. In one Instance, He condescended to Declare, what Determinate Number of Righteous persons in a Government should suffice, to Prevent the Destruction of the Whole. And who would not Wish and Labour to be ranked in such a Blessed Number? Who would not Crown his Repentance

* Ezek. xxii. 30.

for his Own Sins, with all the *Effects* of a True Sorrow for the Sins of his Brethren, thereby Contributing to *Their* Present Safety and Happiness, as well as his Own?

But if any man should fail, This Day, of Testifying in his *Heart*, under the Presence of *God*, the *Searcher* of Hearts, and Hereafter, in his *Words* and *Actions*, as Occasions shall Require, his Abhorrence of any of the Sins, which Appear in the Nation, and Threaten to bring Mischief upon it; let him be well Apprized, how far he would be Answerable to his Countrey, if it should be Depopulated by a Monster, which he will not lend a hand to Destroy; how Properly he may be accounted a *Partaker* of the Sins, which he does not, Proportionably to his Power and Opportunities, Oppose and Discountenance, and not only so, but which he does not so much as Disapprove and Detest; and, by Consequence, how far he may be Accountable for those Calamities, which *National* Guilt may bring upon us.

And, that the Reasons of the Duty, which have been offer'd, may be the more subservient to the Present Great purpose of our Reconciliation to God, let us Apply them, briefly, to a Few *Particulars*, under which every one may try himself, by the *General* Observations that have been made, and form a Competent Knowledge, whether he Contributes, by an utter Disapprobation of his Brethren's Sins, and the Proper Effects of it, to the *Preservation*, or, by his Approbation of them, and the Effects of That, to the *Destruction* of his Countrey.

The *Particulars*, which I shall mention, do nearly concern All Christians; and yet, to such an Inexcusable and Prodigious Length are we run, in our *Divisions* and Animosities, that they now reach to Points, which are the *Common Cause* of all the Faithful Disciples of *Christ*. And This very Thing might be here insisted on, as a Principal Article amongst those Sins of Others, which every Man ought to Detest and Bewail, if the Charge of it were not so General and Comprehensive, that I thought it Proper to be mention'd

mention'd under the First Head of this Discourse, concerning every Man's Repentance for his own Particular Sins. There is little stress to be laid upon our Repentance, so long as we Act by the Flagitious Principles of *Partiality, Prejudice, and Respect of Persons*, and that even in the Things of *Religion*. It can neither be Concealed, nor Excused, that we are beset with Men so Abandon'd to Bigotry and Prejudice, that they commonly graft a Disesteem and Neglect of the Duties and Principles of Christianity, upon their Aversion, and Unjust Aversion too, to the Person, by whom they are vindicated, or recommended, if he Differs from Them in any Point relating to their Secular Interest. This is such Consummate Iniquity, such a Readiness to Offer up *God* upon the Altar of *Mammon*, that nothing Less, than the Streams Issuing forth from the Fountain of *Infinite Mercy*, could Hitherto have sufficed to wash off the Stains of it's Transcendent Guilt. 'Tis next to an Impossibility, that a Kingdom so Wretchedly, so Impiously Divided, should stand.

This being observed concerning This Depravity, the Wild Spirit of Division, which indeed mixeth more or less, with Most of our other Depravities, I proceed to those *Particular* Sins of Other Men, which were proposed to be mention'd, as worthy of our Detestation and Sorrow. And the

1. *First* of them is, A Neglect and Contempt of *Revealed Religion*. There are Men to be found, who have set up their Reason for their Idol; who have fixed their own Natural Notions for their Only Guides, Disregarding and Despising the Guidance, and the Authority of God's Holy Word, which is given them, from Heaven, for the Adequate Rule of their Lives. Let those for ever give up their Pretensions to *Just Thinking*, as well as to *Religion*, who will not Allow the Highest Reverence towards those Scriptures, whose Divine Authority is attested by such Evidence, as Nothing but Perverseness can Reject, and Common Sense obliges us to Believe. We must strike out of our Minds all our Notions of the Distance betwixt the Almighty, and our Selves,

Selves, before we can Prevent Trembling, under the least Thought of *Irreverence* towards *His* Sacred Word. What Miseries then may we not expect to follow the Provocations of those Miscreants, who Dare in their Words and Writings, to *Oppose* and *Explode* it? If the Air should become *Pestilential*, have we not too much reason to think, that Their breathing in it, is a Chief Thing, that hath made it so?

As the Revelation of God's Will, is the Highest Instance of his Mercy; so do the Despisers of it, and all Those who do either Approve and Encourage them, or, do not Detest and Bewail Their Impieties, provoke him to punish the *Abuse* of the Greatest Blessing, with the Sharpest Judgments. The Wise and Pious *Martyrs* Willingly laid down *Their* Lives in the *Defence* of the Gospel; And *Ours* are Like to fall an *Unwilling* Sacrifice to the *Contempt* of it.

2dly, The Impieties of those, who, though they do not throw off All Revealed Religion, do yet contend against the Necessity of Believing the Great *My-*

series of it, such as the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, or, the *Divine Nature* of our Blessed Saviour, Christ Jesus, *God Blessed for ever*: Their Impieties do as Properly call for our Abhorrence, as their Persons do for our Compassionate and Tender concern for their Salvation. The *Abhorrence* of their *Impieties* is as Consistent with the Intire *Love* of their *Persons*, as the Abhorrence of our Own Sins is with the Love of our Selves.

Since the *Author of Religion*, is likewise the *Governour of the World*, it must be Reasonable and Just to expect, that *he will rule the Nations with a Rod of Iron*, if they resolve to be Obstinate in Denying the Things, which he expressly Commands them to Believe. God's Displeasure is Highly provoked by all *Open Instances of Unbelief*, and by all the Arguments Devised and Offer'd to support it, how Artful or smooth soever they may be; And that Provocation is increased by every man, who does either Approve, and Abett, or, who does not Disapprove and Detest them. For, God Judgeth of men by the Inward State of their
their

their Minds, as well as by their Outward Actions and Professions; and therefore those, who, on account of some *Temporal* Consideration, do not Openly Declare themselves in Favour of Unbelief, and yet are so far Friends to it, as not to Disapprove, and, upon all proper occasions, Declare against it, are, in the Judgment of God, reckon'd amongst Unbelievers; * *For he that is not with me, is against me.* They who Sit Still, as Unconcern'd, upon such Occasions, may perhaps account their Unconcernedness and their Silence, a Safe and Notable piece of Management; But they would find this a Groundless and a Dangerous Opinion, if they did but sufficiently weigh the force of our Saviour's Declaration; † *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the Holy Angels.* Such Texts as These ought to be Continually revolved in the minds of

* Matth. xii. 30.

† Matth. x. 38.

Those Persons, who are Apt to stand *Neuter* in a case, where *Neutrality* is Culpable and Pernicious; who are such Slaves to their own Fears, and to *this adulterous and sinful generation*, that they will not venture, even to *Speak* in the Defence of their *Lord's* Honour, or to shew any Dislike to the Contumelious and Reproachful, the Violent and Perfidious Opposition, which is made to the Great Articles of Faith, by a Race of men, who are scarce more a Scandal to the *Gospel* it self, than to a Countrey, Professing the Belief of it.

'Tis High time for us to be Affected with a Due Sense of these Things, when we are in manifest Danger of being Undone by Them. Let us search the *Scriptures* and Learn, how Heinous a Sin Unbelief is, and then Impartially consider, if we can yet be Impartial in Any thing, whether it is not to be accounted a Leading Occasion of the Heaviest Punishments that fall upon Mankind. Can we Doubt the *Malignancy* of the Disputers against the *Divinity* of our *Lord*, and the other Articles of our Faith, after the Caution
given,

given, by God's Holy Spirit, * against *False teachers, who shall Privily bring in Damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

Wonderful is the Difference of Different mens Dispositions and Behaviour, under the *Profession* of the Gospel. At *Ephesus*, the *Sorcerers*, upon their Conversion, were so Pious and Ingenuous, that they *brought their books together, and burnt them before all men*: Rather than the Records of their *Curious Arts*, their Sorceries and Incantations, should stand in the way of the Gospel, they chose, in Obedience and Honour to the Faith they embraced, *to offer them for a Burnt-Offering to the Lord*. And should it not move our Utmost Compassion to think, that there should be, amongst Us, any Authors or Advocates of *Blasphemy* and *Unbelief*, so Hardy, and so Tenacious of their Impiety, as Incorrigibly to *Persist* in *Bewitching the People*, and, rather than Burn, or Retract their *Curious Books*, run

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

the Hazard of being, *Themselves, cast into the fire that shall never be quenched.* This Remarkable Caution against Unbelief, given by the Apostle, * deserves to be well and often weighed by all Those, who *Reject and Disdain* the Great Truths of the Gospel, and by all the *Favourers* of that Contemptuous Opposition, which is made to Them; *Beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, ye Despisers, and Wonder and Perish.*

3dly, All Kinds of *Profanation*, observable in the World, are Proper Objects of our *Detestation* and *Sorrow*. The Profanation of God's Holy *Name* is charged, as a Crying Sin, against God's People, and in it are included, Perjury, Common Oaths, Execrations, and every Expression which derogates from the Majesty of *this Great and Glorious Name, THE LORD THY GOD.*

The Profanation of *Places* Consecrated to *God* is an Offence, which He hath distinguished, in these Words, by the

* Acts xiii. 40, 41.

Prophet*; *As I live, saith the Lord God, surely, because thou hast defiled my Sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thy Abominations; therefore will I also diminish thee—A third part of thee shall die with the Pestilence.*

The Profanation also of *Times* Dedicated to God, does incur his Displeasure, and bring Punishments upon a People. To which Purpose, we are thus taught our Duty, and our Danger, relating to the *Sabbath*, the Violations whereof are Sinful, under the *Christian*, as well as the *Mosaical* Dispensation†; *I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and Profane the Sabbath day? Did not your Fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this City? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath.* These words should be Maturely considered, by all Persons, who are addicted to Profaning the *Lord's Day*, and especially by Those, who run even into the Neglect of the

* Ezek. v. 11, 12. † Nehem. xiii. 17, 18.

Publick Worship; whether they run into it, out of a Pretence, that they do not Want Instruction, nor Expect Improvement, by the Publick Ministry of the Word, as if it were no Offence, to Neglect and Despise those Ministrations which God hath appointed, or, as if Their Skill in the Rules of Duty could excuse Them from the Performance of it, or, their mighty Knowledge of the Word could Cancel Those Obligations to the *Publick Worship* of God, which are Equally Incumbent upon the Learned, and Unlearned, *High and Low, Rich and Poor*, equally Incumbent upon all the Servants of God, who are Particularly caution'd against the Sin of *forsaking the Assembling themselves together, as the manner of some is*; or, whether they run into it, out of Sloth and Idleness, or, on account of engaging themselves in *Temporal* Affairs and Employments, or, for the Sake of Indulging Themselves in *Luxury*: For All such Persons, whatsoever Fanciful Opinions they may muster up in their own Favour, are Highly Criminal, and do Increase the Guilt, and the Dangers of the Nation.

And,

And, not to urge any more *Particulars*, All Things whatsoever, which are Dedicated to God's Honour and Service, have a Divine Character stamp'd upon Them, and whosoever Defaceth that Character, making no *Distinction* betwixt Them and Common Things, and, much more, whosoever does Brand Them with Peculiar Ignominy, and makes the *Disdain* and *Contempt* of Them, the Only Mark of Distinction betwixt Them and Common Things, falls under this heavy Charge of Profanation; * *Thou hast despised mine Holy Things——They have put no Difference between the Holy and Profane, and I am profaned among them.* And this Abomination is One Great Reason of what follows, in the Close of the Chapter, *Therefore have I poured out mine Indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath.* How great reason then hath a Nation, to be Earnest in the Deprecation of Impending Judgments, when 'tis Miserably Infested with Profane, Open Assaults upon Sacred

* Ezek. xxii.

Things,

Things, with Writers, who Boldly Disclaim and Condemn, Despise and Ridicule the Positive Ordinances and Institutions of *God*. A Kingdom must be Infatuated, if such Appearances in it as These, *Wandering Stars* scattering their Baneful Influence upon it, should raise in it no Fears, Jealousies, or Suspicions, that *the Desolation thereof is nigh*.

What hath been hitherto observed, relates to the *Divine* Law, and *Divine* Authority; But indeed the *Neglect* of putting *Humane* Laws in Execution, or, of exercising *Humane* Authority, for Suppressing of Vice and the Encouragement of Virtue, wheresoever such Neglect be Plainly Observable in any, even the Lowest Magistrates, or in Persons dignified with any, even the Lowest degrees of such Authority, is exceedingly Sinful, and the

4th, and Last Thing which I shall mention as worthy of our *Sorrow* and *Abhorrence*, and our *Deprecations* of the *Publick* Sufferings, which may be its Just Recompence and Reward. And such a Concern for their *Iniquity* is so far from being

being an Infringement upon the Duties of Respect and Honour to their *Persons*, that, on several accounts, it ought to be Increased and Improved by the Sense of Them. Far be it from any Christian to derogate from the Authority or Dignity of Magistracy, by Expofing, or Describing, or Pointing out, any of those Offenders who are vested with it; But far be it also from Him, to Neglect a Secret Disapprobation, in his own Mind, of such Iniquities and Corruptions, as shall, at any time, Plainly appear in any of Them, or, to Neglect the offering up his *Supplications, Prayers and Intercessions*, on Their Account.

Wholesome Laws, which amount to a sufficient encouragement of Virtue, and Restraint or Punishment of Vice, are the *Blessing* of a Nation; But the *Neglect* of putting them in Execution is the *Curse* of it. Let this sink deep into the minds of all Those, who are Qualified and Adorned with sufficient *Power*, and yet Unfaithfully neglect the Application and Exercise of that Power, to Guard God's Honour against all Open Attacks upon it, and to

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Suppress

Suppress that Drunkenness, those Execrations, those Violations of the Sabbath, those various other Instances of Profaneness, those Blasphemies, and all those other Enormities, which Pollute the Land, and Therefore lay it open to the Fierce Anger of God; Let Them, in *Due time*, consider, how they would Hereafter bear the Punishment, or the *Thoughts* of having contributed to the Speedy Destruction that may come upon us, Through those Vices, which it was as much within the Compass of their *Power*, as of their *Duty*, to have Discouraged and Suppressed.

'Tis Incumbent upon us, to Bewail Their Unhappiness and our Own, if they should *Violate* their Obligations; as well as to pray, that they may *Fulfil* these Obligations *to execute Justice, and to maintain Truth.*

What hath been said, to Enforce That part of our Duty, which Relates to the Sins of our *Brethren*, amounts to This: Since the Corruptions of our Brethren are a Manifest *Dis honour* to God and Religion, and a Just *Occasion* of God's reducing

cing Us, and Them, and our Countrey, to Distress and Destruction; Therefore our Obligation to Detest, and Bewail, and Disclaim Their Sins, ariseth from the Necessary Love of *God* and True Zeal for his Honour, from our Love of our *Brethren* Themselves, and of our *Countrey*, and from the Natural Principle of *Self-preservation*. And, as the *Obligation* of this Duty is built upon these strong Foundations, so the *Reasons* of its *Acceptance* with God, have been, Above, Deduced from the same Fundamental Principles; To which I shall only add God's *Declared* High Approbation of it, in the *ixth Ch.* of *Ezek.* where, representing the Corruptions of *Jerusalem*, and His purposes of Destroying it, upon account of Them, He fixeth a Special Mark of Favour upon *the men that Sigh, and that Cry for all the Abominations that be done in the midst thereof.*

The Sum of what hath been said, concerning our *Whole* Duty is This: The *Safety* of the Kingdom depends upon God's *Favours* to it; God's Favours to the Kingdom depend upon its *Conformity* to

His *Will*; The *National* Conformity to God's Will depends upon such a Conformity of the *Particular* Persons, which the Community consists of; and the *Perfection* of that National Conformity Riseth in Proportion to the *Numbers* of such Conformable Persons, whose Spiritual State is Distinctly seen and Estimated, in One View, by the Omniscient God; Such a Conformity of Particular Persons to God's Will implies their utter *Aversion* to all *Evil*, whether in *Themselves* or in *Other* persons, and Their Intire *Love* of all *Goodness*; Such Their Aversion and Love do Imply Their *Sincere Repentance* for *their Own Sins*, and *their Detestation* of *the Sins of their Brethren*, and all the *Proper Consequences* of Both; Therefore the *Safety* of the Kingdom depends upon such our *Repentance*, and *Detestation*, and the *Proper Fruits* and *Effects* of Them.

II. The *Second* and *Last* thing to be taken notice of, is, the *Punishment* which we *may expect*, if our *Duty* be not *Fulfilled*.

We should Seriously and Attentively Possess our Minds with the *Thoughts* of the *Judgments*, which hang over us, that

we may be the more *Earnest* in our Devout Addresses to the Wise *Governour of the World*, upon whom Alone it depends, whether They shall, in Fury, break in upon us, or, in Mercy, be With-held from us. Let the Quick Sense, of our *Danger* add Quickness to the Sense, and Fidelity to the Discharge of our *Duty*. Let our Imaginations give us a View, and may we never have any Other View than what *Imagination* can give, of the Vast Miseries we should labour under, if that Horrid and Relentless Minister of Death, which is now wasting our Neighbouring Nations, should make an Inroad into our Own. 'Tis not Easy to be conceived, how we shall be Oppressed, and Sunk under Consternation and Confusion, if this mighty Conqueror shall find us in a State of *Impenitence*, if we shall be Surprized with those Gloomy and Dismal Days, when *thousands shall fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand*, and we our Selves shall be under Constant and Piercing Apprehensions, of having our Own Tortured Bodies added to the Heaps of the *Fallen*. Life will lose its *Value*,

when all the the Comforts and Beauties of it are Vanished, and when it appears in no Colours but the Sable and Mournful ones of *Perplexity* and *Astonishment*; When we shall be continually Haunted with a Dread, not Unlike to that of *Cain*, that every one that meeteth us, will Slay us; When we shall, at once, wish for the Comfort of Conversing with our Friends, and yet Shrink under that Wish, lest They should indeed prove our Enemies, and Undesignedly give us the Mortal Wound; When at once, Natural *Appetite* shall push us forward to a necessary Supply of *Nourishment*, and more Cautious *Thought* Forbid our Approaches to it, lest it should be Impregnated with the Fatal Poyson; When we shall be Incessantly racked with Fear of Admitting the very Air, we Live by, lest we should draw in Death with it; When Time shall be Intirely swallowed up in One Uninterrupted Funeral; When we shall be ever Uncertain, whether the Terrors of the Present Moment are Risen as High, as Terrors can Rise, or, whether the Next Moments, proving as Deceitful as the Present

sent, shall bring on a Scene of still Ghastlier Thoughts, or Ghastlier Sights, than Those that usher'd in the moments, which Now sit so very Heavy, that they seem to have lost their Fleeting Nature, and to Dwell upon us; When Clouds of Horror Drive so thick over our Minds, that there is no Room for one Gladson Ray of Light, or Comfort to break in between them; and, When we shall be scarce able to Determine, whether such a Death, or such a Dread, be the Greater Evil.

We are at present to consider, what our Opinions of things will then be; how Willing and Ready we shall then be, to purchase Relief under our Insuperable Difficulties, Freedom from our Insupportable Reflexions, and an Intire Sense of Safety, at any Rate, or by any means; either, by an Utter Detestation of the Sins of Other Men, without *respect of Persons*, or without any Other Respect and Difference, than That of turning the Greatest Weight of our Abhorrence, upon the Iniquities and Abominations of Those, who seem to have been the Greatest Occasions of our Misery; or, by Boldly Exhort-

ing and Reproving the most Profligate, or Powerful Sinner alive; or, by Abandoning, Utterly, our Infidelity, or Impenitency, our Corrupt Principles, or Corrupt Practices, all the Dearest of our Sinful Gratifications, of Body or Mind; Tamely submitting our *Reason* to an Unshaken Belief of the *Mysteries*, and our *Passions* to an Intire Obedience to the *Precepts* of the Gospel.

Let us therefore Now, by a wise Choice, take into our Minds, such a Judgment of Things, as we shall not Then be able to keep Out of Them; Let us now be Industrious in Performing the Duties, which we shall Then Hate the Thoughts of Neglecting. Though our Endeavours may Now be sufficient to *Prevent* the Judgments of God, they may not Then suffice to the *Removal* of Them. Let us turn to the Lord with all our Hearts, and diligently *seek him, whilst he may be found. Behold, now is the Accepted time, behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

Let our *Apprehensions* of the Evils, which surround us, work so Happy and Lasting a *Change* in us, that those *Evils* Themselves

Themselves may never Invade and overtake us, but that we may obtain the Mercy and Favour of the *most High*, such Degrees of his Mercy and Favour, as may Effectually Preserve us from Destruction, both Temporal and Eternal, through the Powerful *Merits* and *Mediation* of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, *Jesus Christ*; *To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and one God, be all Honour, Praise, and Thanksgiving, both Now, and for Evermore. Amen.*

S E R M O N

SERMON VIII.

The Temporal Advantages of Religion.

PROV. III. 16.

*Length of days is in her right hand; and
in her left hand Riches and Honour.*

WISDOM, or Religion, is here introduced Holding out to men's View, the greatest Temporal Blessings, as Inducements to engage them in her Service. And the same Encouragements to Virtue and Goodness, are offer'd in Other places of Holy Scripture. Therefore St. Paul assures us, * that *Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that Now is,* as

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

well as of *That which is to come*. And yet, the same *Holy Spirit*, which Sometimes gives us a prospect of Good Men, Drawn in the most Agreeable and Beautiful Light, does Elsewhere represent Them under the utmost Disadvantages of Shade and Situation: They are Sometimes Figured out, as Crown'd with Happiness, and at Other times, as Loaded with Misery.

It will Therefore be necessary, in treating of this Subject, to consider Three Things:

I. First, *That the Proposal of Temporal Advantages, in the Text, is subject to several Limitations and Conditions, and not Intended to be Understood in an UNIVERSAL and ABSOLUTE sense, as Infallibly Ascertaining these Advantages to every Good man in the World;*

II. Secondly, *That according to the Natural state of Things, which God hath Determin'd, according to the Ordinary and settled Course and Tendencies of Human Affairs, a Religious Life is the most proper and Likely means of securing those Advantages; And*

III. Thirdly,

III. Thirdly, *That, Abstracting from the Natural Tendency of Things, God does frequently, by his Special Providence, vouchsafe these Advantages to his Faithful servants; And such Advantages, when placed in the hands of Good men, may be properly accounted Blessings.*

I. *That the proposal of Temporal Advantages, in the Text, is subject to several Limitations and Conditions, and not intended to be understood in an UNIVERSAL and ABSOLUTE sense, as Infallibly Ascertaining these Advantages to every Good man in the World. And the Truth of this Proposition may appear from the following Particulars.*

1st. *The Encouragement proposed in the Text, cannot be understood Otherwise, than as they are Compatible with the Established State and Order of Things in the World. If Honour and Riches, in the Highest sense of Them, were to be the Portion of every Good Man, the Consequence must be, (as Few Good men as there are in the World) that the Honourable and the Mighty would do more than bear a Just Proportion to their*
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Inferiours; And many of the most Necessary Offices in Human Society must be Neglected, through want of proper Persons to Sustain and Discharge Them.

Indeed, as *Riches* stand purely Opposed to *Want*, and signify only such a Plenty, as is Suitable to every Man's Particular Station; And as *Honour* is Strictly Opposed to *Disgrace*, and signifies only such a Fair Esteem and Reputation, as is Suitable to every Man's Rank and Order; As Riches and Honour are taken in This Sense, and it seems to be a proper sense of them, in the Promise of them annex'd to Religion, They are without Doubt, Generally bestowed upon Good men, when they are not Inconsistent with any Condition necessarily Implied in That Promise. In like manner, the Promise of *Long Life* must needs be Interpreted, under the Implicit condition of it's consistency with men's Natural Frame and State, whereby one Man is Disposed to a much Earlier Dissolution than Another; Insomuch that Nothing Less than a Miracle can bring the
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the Lives of all Good men to one and the same Measure of Duration.

There may indeed be Instances, as will be observed below, of God's prolonging a Good man's Life, in an *Extraordinary* manner. But the promise of Long Life to Good Men, consider'd in *General*, cannot well be understood to signify any more than This, that their Lives shall, Ordinarily, be carried on, by Divine Providence to their Natural Period, and not be Judicially cut off, as Other men's Lives may be, before They have filled up the Bounds, which Nature hath Assigned to Them. And yet, 'tis here to be observed, that it is sometimes matter of Divine *Favour* to Good men, that they are taken away, before the Term of their Natural Lives is expired. For thus the Holy Spirit hath taught us, and 'tis a Lesson sufficient to prevent our Judging Rashly and Censoriously of Events, which we know not the Reasons of; *The Righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none* consi-

considering, that the Righteous is taken away from the evil to come. *

2dly, The Truth of the Proposition before us appears from Hence, that the Spiritual and *Eternal* Welfare of some Good Men might be very much Obstructed, if not Finally Prevented by *Temporal* Prosperity. *Everlasting Life* is the Grand Blessing, to which Good men are Intitled by the promise of God; And all Other Promises, which he hath made them, do Presuppose and Imply their Consistency with That. Whensoever therefore, their Tempers and Dispositions are such, that their full enjoyment of Earthly Blessings would interfere with their Attainment of Celestial Bliss; the Divine Providence Graciously withholds those Advantages from them, which would prove Destructive to them.

Indeed Men Obstinately *Wicked* are oftentimes Indulged, by Providence, in a state of Affluence, in the Enjoyment of all Temporal Advantages; which they

* Isa. lvii. 1.

do Abuse, and, by That Abuse, render the Instruments of their own Ruin; For *the Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them**. And the *Reasons* of this Providential Permission are many and plain, but unnecessary to be offer'd in this Discourse, because they are far Removed from the Subject, as well as the Occasion of it. However, the Mention of this Permission seems to magnifie God's Tender Regard to his Chosen Servants, whom he will not Indulge in any the most Agreeable Circumstances, whereby they may Forfeit, or Hazard their Salvation.

Such is the *Knowledge* of God, that he Thoroughly understands every Man's Qualifications and Dispositions; and such his *Goodness*, that he will not Trust Good men with a Larger Portion of Prosperity, than they are able to Manage, lest they should sink under the Weight of it. Where either Ballast, or a Skilful Pilot is wanting, there the more Full and Swelling the Sails, the Greater is the danger of Shipwreck.

* Prov. i. 32.

3^{dly}, And more Particularly, As some Good men's Tempers and Dispositions would render them Unsafe in a Course of Prosperity, so are they better Qualified to exercise those Virtues, which are Needful in a *Depressed*, than those which are the Duties and the Ornaments of an *Exalted* State. Different Plants do require Different kinds of Soyl to Thrive in: *Patience* and *Resignation* may Flourish and grow up to the Highest perfection in a Soul, wherein *Condescension*, *Liberality* and *Generosity* would either take no Root, or, not rise to Maturity, but Pine and Wither, Droop and Die. Our Wise and Merciful Creatour gives his Several servants proper Occasions of exercising those several Virtues which he hath planted in Them, and which are most Likely to be Fruitful of the Highest Degrees of *Godliness* upon Earth; and of *Glory* in Heaven.

But, after All, the Difficulties which Good men are reduced to, are not always laid upon them, purely on account of Themselves, or, because such Circumstances will Best accord with their

Spiritual Welfare, or, are Best adapted to the Exercise of their Peculiar Virtues, but for other Reasons, and to other Purposes. For

4^{thly}, The Difficulties and Sufferings of Good men are sometimes Necessary to the Advancement of *God's Glory*; And the Glory of *God* which is the Ultimate *End* of all *Beings*, may well be understood and supposed, as an Implicit *Condition* in all *Promises*. On account of this Great End it was, that the Apostles, and Other Holy Martyrs Lived in Continual Trouble, and Died in Exquisite Torment. Their Consummate Piety did not want the Harsh Discipline of Sufferings, for it's own Improvement; but their Suffering became the Necessary and Effectual Instruments of Propagating *God's Honour*, and *Man's Salvation*. And in Other and Lower Instances, the Submission, the Easiness, and the Cheerfulness, which shine in Good Men, under the Severer Dispensations of Heaven, do greatly Promote *God's Honour*, and the Interest of Religion: They are Abundant Testimonies

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nies, that God is Especially Present and Propitious to his Servants, when they stand most in Need of him: They are an Abundant and Endearing Conviction, that the Spirit of Religion is the Only Spirit of Power, and of Firmness, and of Excellency, which may be Depended on, and will never Fail; In comparison of Which, all the Powers of the World are as that Brittle and *Broken Reed*, whereon if Infirm and Afflicted Man shall *lean*, he will find it so far from Supporting him, that it will Sink under him; and not only So, but will go *into his hand, and pierce it*.

These, and such as These, are the *Conditions* and *Limitations* previously Supposed and Implied in the Promises of Temporal Blessings to Good men; And they may supply us with these Three Observations, amongst many others;

1st, That Temporal Inconvenience is far from being a Certain Mark of God's Displeasure, and is, therefore, far from being a Just Reason of entertaining an *Ill Opinion* of those that suffer it, or,

even of taking up any *Suspensions* of Iniquity or Unworthiness in them.

2dly, That, as Temporal Advantages are *Design'd*, and *Proposed* to us, only as Inferiour and Subordinate Motives to Religion, so our *Esteem* of them should be, Comparatively, very Low, and very Little, that our Thoughts and Desires may be the more Closely and Intirely fixed upon the principal Object of our Hopes, the Blessings of a Future, and an Endless Life; And

3dly, That these *Conditions* and *Limitations* of the Encouragements, in the Text, are in Themselves highly Reasonable and Just; And a Man must throw up all Pretensions to Wisdom and Goodness, before he can Wish or Expect such a Distribution of Temporal Advantages, as would be Inconsistent, either with that variety of *Ranks* and *Orders*, under which the Societies of Men are Ranged and Established by Infinite Wisdom; or, with the *Eternal* Salvation of his own Soul, or, with his own most *Successful Progress* in the Way of Salvation; or, with *God's Honour* and the Advancement

ment of Religion, or, with any Other of the Wise Ends and Purposes of God's Dispensations. 'Tis Sufficient to *Good* men, that, so far as is Consistent with such Great Things as These, they may properly expect the Blessings in the Text. And the *Reasons* of such an Expectation will appear from the other Two Heads of Discourse still Before us.

II. Secondly Therefore; *So Graciously hath God Provided for the Temporal Advantages of his servants, that, according to the Natural state of Things which he hath Determin'd, according to the Ordinary course and Tendencies of Human Affairs, the most Proper and Likely means of securing those Advantages, are Virtue and Religion.*

'Tis Disingenuous and Ungrateful, 'tis Impious, 'tis a kind of Implicit Atheism, to Ascribe the Happy *Effects* of Virtue to *the Nature of Things*, without Acknowledging, that the Nature of Things was Design'd, Instituted, and Ordain'd by the Great Maker and Governour of the World. It is not owing to Un-

certain and Irregular, Unjust and Unequal *Chance*, but to the Wise Decree and Appointment of *the most High*, that *Temperance* contributes to the Continuance of *Health* and *Life*; or, that *the hand of the Diligent maketh rich*; or, that the *Faithful* Exercises and Improvements of those Excellent *Faculties*, which Bounteous Nature hath planted in some Men's Minds, are the Wings, whereon they Soar to *Reputation* and *Honour*.

Some Virtues have a Peculiar Aptness in them, to produce some *Peculiar* kinds of Benefit; but they All Agree in the Main Point, They bear their Several Parts in Finishing the Harmony and the Happiness of Life. The Power of Virtue Therefore is contracted and Diminished by those *Sages*, who, representing it as Efficacious and Fruitful of its own Rewards, are very *Large* in their Accounts of those Internal Treasures of *Peace* and *Satisfaction*, which it bestows upon the Mind, scarce *Mentioning* or *Regarding* its *External* Acquirements, on which the Necessaries, the Conveniencies, and the

the Ornaments of Life do greatly depend. Each of the Sundry Fruits of Virtue Deservedly Challengeth our Regard, and should Excite us to Adore *the Riches of His Goodness*, who hath thus Impregnated our Duty with Comfort and Delight.

A man Armed with *Virtue* and *Religion* can stand Firm and Immoveable, whilst the most Violent and raging Waves of Misfortune Dash against him: His *Strength* is equal to the Heaviest *Affliction*, and he Bravely *Repels*, or *Cheerfully Receives* the Keenest Arrows that are Level'd at him, till his Soul, which Nothing could Crush, or Conquer upon *Earth*, takes its Triumphant Flight into *Heaven*. This mighty Prowess of Virtue, One of the Noblest Gifts of God, ought to be a *Principal* Subject of our Thoughts and Thanksgivings. But, Difficulties and Distress not being Eligible, we have reason to Rejoyce, that the Best means of *Supporting* us under them, are likewise the Best means of *Preserving* us from Them. For Virtue, in its own Native state, is so Attractive of *Exter-*

nal Advantages, that it can scarce fail of Drawing them Effectually after it, unless they should, in their Motion, meet with an Interruption, or Impediment, from that Sovereign Hand, by which this Glorious Law of Attraction was given. Varieties of Temporal Blessings are in the Possession and Disposal of true Wisdom; And she does Usually and Easily, where no *Extraordinary Providence* Intervenes, Defend, Preserve, and Adorn the Mansions of her own Abode. And how Little reason Good men have to apprehend, that the Streams of Providence shall run in *Opposition* to them, will appear if we consider

III. Thirdly, *that Abstracting from the natural Tendency of Things, God does frequently, by his Special Providence, vouchsafe to his Faithful Servants, the Advantages mention'd in the Text; And such Advantages, when placed in the hands of Good men, may be Properly accounted Blessings.* And under this Head, Each of the Advantages mention'd in the Text should be Distinctly consider'd. The

I. First of them is *Length of Days*. And sometimes God is pleased, by an *Extraordinary* Dispensation, to multiply those Years, which, in his Ordinary course of Providence, are allotted to a Good man's Life. Thus were *fifteen years*, by the Divine favour and Indulgence, added to the Life of *Hezekiah*, even after the Prophet had brought this Moving message from Heaven to him; * *thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*

Sometimes God is pleased to Prolong Good men's Lives, by proper Acts of *Deliverance* from those External dangers, which would, Otherwise, prove Fatal to them. Thus was *St. Paul* deliver'd from the Conspiracy laid against him by the *Jews*; And a more remarkable Providence frustrated an Attempt made upon the Life of *St. Ambrose*, Bishop of *Milan*; who was no less Famous for his Works of *Piety* and *Charity*, than he was for his *Noble Extraction*.

* 2 Kings. xx. 1.

The Gracious Providence of God does oftentimes prolong the Lives of his Servants, by proper Acts of *Preservation*. For this must be meant by these, * and other Parallel expressions in Scripture; *Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall defend thee under his Wings. There shall no evil happen unto thee.* Instances of Good men's providential *Deliverances* may be more *Signal*, and strike a Deeper Impression upon us; But Instances of their *Preservation* are more *Frequent*, or, rather to be accounted Constant and Perpetual; An Invisible Divine Power is Always Defending them from the Invisible and unknown Designs of Evil Men, or, from Impending Evil Accidents, which would, otherwise, fall upon Life, and break it in pieces. It is Applicable to the *Preservation* of Life, as well as the other circumstances of Good Men, that † *all things work together for good to them that love God*: A Passage of

* Ps. xii. 7. cxxi. 5, 7. xci. 4. † Rom. viii. 28.

Scripture, ever supplying Comfort to the Expectations, and ever Confirmed by the Experience of Good Men. This Passage is said to have been Particularly recollected with high satisfaction, by that great Example of Faith and Beneficence, *Epiphanius* Bishop of *Salamis*, in the Close of his Life, which was then drawn out to the Length of about a Hundred years.

Who can be so Unjust, as to withhold that *Veneration*, which is a Debt Indispensably due to Old Age thus crown'd with Virtue? Or, who can Doubt that This is a Scene of Delight and True *Happiness*? For if a Man's Happiness essentially consists in his Firm Dependence on the Divine Favour, grounded upon a sense of his own Virtue and Goodness; then the Longer his *Experience*, and the more Extensive the *Effects*, and the more Clear and Full the *Testimonies* of his own Goodness are, the Greater must the measures of his Happiness be. A Long Life thus Improved, thus Accomplished, thus Blessed, is no Faint Resemblance of That Immortality, which

which was the Portion of the *First Adam*, nor yet of That, which is purchased for us by the *Second, the Lord from Heaven*. The *Felicity* therefore, and the *Dignity* of such a state as This must be obvious and plain to every one, who passeth a Right Judgment upon the Principles of Human Nature, upon the Promises of God to Good men, upon the Effects of Virtue and Religion, and upon the Nature and Conditions of Happiness.

2dly, *Riches* are oftentimes the Effects of God's Special providence over Good men; which seems evident from *Gen. xxxix. 2, 3. Deut. xxviii. 8, 11, 12. Prov. x. 22.* and many other Texts. *Hezekiah's* Riches were exceedingly Increased by the same Gracious Providence, which Prolonged his Life; And the same Divine Power and Goodness, which conducted *Abraham* into a *Good Old Age*, did supply him with Riches in abundance. And we may Easily conceive, that when God gives Wealth to his most *Sincere* and *Faithful* servants, he knows, that the Abundance thus bestowed upon them, will not prove Pernicious to them. Riches

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are not Let Loose upon a *Good Man*, as Enemies to Wound him: Infinite Wisdom first Guards and Fortifies him against all the Mischief they can do; And then puts them into his Possession and Power, that he may *extract* all the Good, and *Avoid* the Poyson of them. And indeed it must be a wonderful Strength and Constancy of Mind, that can render a Man Impregnable, and able to Hold out, under the many and Violent Temptations, which an Abundance of Wealth is always Playing against him. It must be a vast Weight of Wisdom, that can keep down that Towering *Spirit of Self-sufficiency* within him, which all his outward Circumstances do conspire in Raising to the most Dangerous Height. Nothing but the *Greatest Mind*, and That Supported by the *Holy Spirit*, can Safely bear the Greatest Fortune. Glorious then and Admirable must the Endowments of those Faithful and Holy men be, whom God does intrust with Large shares of Earthly Treasures, because he knows, that they are Qualified to Enjoy them with intire *Safety*, and Improve
them

them to the utmost Spiritual *Advantage*; that they will Testifie the *Generosity* of their Souls by the *Effects* of it; and that they will be so far from *Trusting* in their *Riches*, that they will by proper Dispensations, render them Instrumental to the Confirmation of their Trust and Hope in God.

'Tis Remarkable in the Character of a Great Prince, that, when some of his Friends, observing his Unbounded Munificence, took the Liberty to ask him, *What he would have Left for Himself under such a Conduct?* He answer'd, *Hope*. And if an *Heathen* could support Himself, in his Acts of Munificence, upon the Principle of Hope, how Firm and Lasting Foundations of Satisfaction, and Safety, may be laid by *Christians*, in Their Acts of Liberality and Charity. They have plain and Full Evidence, that Their Good Works are an Unexceptionable and Undoubted Principle of their *Affiance* in God; and that Affiance in God is a Further, and High Recommendation of Them to His Favour.

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What Reason then can be assigned for *Vows of Poverty*, when so much Excellent Duty, and so much True Happiness may be drawn from Riches? When Those, whom God first Qualifies, by his *Spirit*, to Resemble him in his *Goodness*, may, *Providentially*, be Qualified to Resemble him in this Blessed *Fruit* of it, an Extensive Beneficence to Mankind?

3dly, and *Lastly*, *Honour* is oftentimes allotted to Good men, by the special Providence of God. And this seems Manifest from 2 *Chron.* i. 12. *Pf.* xci. 14, 15. and many other places of Scripture. Thus was *Daniel* advanced to the Honour of being the * *First President over the Princes*, in *Darius's* Kingdom; and *David* to the Throne of *Israel*. And the Excellency of their Virtues bore full Proportion to the Eminency of their *Stations*, and Titles of Honour. Upon This depended the Completion of their Happiness, and their Glory. 'Tis with *Honour*, as with every Other Talent, That the Happiness arising from it

* Dan. vi. 2.

consists

consists in the *Use* and *Improvement* of it, and 'tis properly a Blessing unto *Good* men Alone; For They Alone can graft upon it, an Assured Expectation of God's Favour. And indeed, They Alone are secure of This Principal Ingredient in it, the *Love* and *Esteem* of Mankind.

Titles of Honour, whether *Hereditary*, or, *Accessional*, when they are not Supported by *Virtue*, do lose a great part of their Value; and therefore a great Part of the Tribute, which would, Otherwise, be paid to Them, is Generally withheld from them. *Wealth*, or, *Honour*, in the Possession of an *Unworthy* person, hath much the same effect upon Mankind, as *Bribery* hath upon *Corrupt Witnesses*; It Extorts, from some men, the *Outward* Testimonies and Expressions of a Deference and Respect, which, in their *Hearts*, they Feel nothing of. It is not in Nature to have a Real, Inward Esteem and Reverence, for Vicious, Profligate, Dissolute, and Therefore Dishonourable Persons. The Deference paid to Them, is only *Forced*, and *Superficial*; Whilst That, which is paid

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to Others, those Happy Others, whose Noble Characters and Noble Qualities do conspire to render them Aimiable and Dear to the Societies of Men, is *Voluntary* and *Generous*, the effect of Hearts flowing with *Love* and *Zeal* towards them.

When the Highest *Titles* are thus Joyn'd by the Brightest *Virtues*, they cannot Fail of raising the Highest *Approbation* and *Esteem* in all the Wifest and Best of Men. And Such Honour may well be accounted a Blessing, which hath excited the Greatest Persons to the Greatest Actions and Enterprizes, in all Ages of the World. So long as the *Desire* of it does not proceed from *Pride*, nor Degenerate into *Vainglory*; so long as it is not mens *Chief*, but *Subordinate* Aim; so long as it is Subservient to the *Love of God*, and *Bounded* by the Laws of Religion; all which Circumstances are *Supposed* in the Character of a Good man; That *Desire* of it is a Natural and Just *Affection*, as the *Attainment* of it is a Proper Refreshment and *Reward* of Pure and Virtuous Minds.

And the *Stability* of this Blessing is

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Equal

Equal to the *Purity* and the *Excellency* of it. *Riches*, or *Life*, may be taken away by Force, or, however, Each of them is the Certain Prey of Devouring Time; But *Honour* is a Blessing too Great to be Destroyed by the most Potent and Bitter Enemies: It riseth the Higher, by the Opposition it meets with, and is so far from yielding to the Cankering Efforts of Time, that it gathers Strength by it's Continuance, and is ever gaining new Degrees of Beauty and Perfection.

Having gone through the Particulars proposed from the Words, I should now briefly Apply them to the Occasion of this Discourse; And yet, such an Application is so Obvious, that it seems almost needless to Offer it.

What hath been observed concerning *Length of Days*, must Already have affected us with full Joy, under the Thoughts of that *Honourable* Person, whom we here see attended with the *Blessings* of Long Life, without the *Burthen* of it; Whom God is still pleased to Guard against This Great Cause of *Complaint*, which is Usually Incident to Others, in a much *Earlier*

lier Period, That their *strength is Then but Labour and Sorrow*; And, Who is now as Happy, in being Free from the *Infirmities of the Mind*, as He hath all along been in that *Course of Virtue*, which is the Necessary Provision of so Valuable a *Freedom*. I only *Mention* that Course of Virtue, without Venturing to *Offend*, by a Particular Account of it; for *Good* men do Agree with Others of a Quite Different Character, in This Respect, that Neither of them can Easily bear an Account of their Own Lives and Actions.

However; Neither the Fear of Offending the Chastest ears, even by a Detail of plain Truths, on the One hand; nor yet an Utter Abhorrence of the Abominable sin of Flattery, on the Other, should restrain me from suggesting the Necessity of our Offering up Praises to God, for the Beneficial Use, which this *Noble* Hand hath made of *Riches*, the Second Advantage proposed in the Text. His Generous and Lasting Provisions for the *Education of Youth*, the *Advancement of Learning*, and the *Defence and Propagation of Religion*, Cannot be Concealed, and shall never

be Forgot. Blessed the Man, who thus Cultivates and Inricheth his Countrey, by his Passage through it!

Honour is the Last Talent mention'd in the Text; And this also the same Faithful Hand hath Preserv'd without *Violation*, and Improved to the Utmost *Advantage*; For where a *Title of Honour*, and an *Honourable Life*, do reflect a Mutual and Constant Lustre upon one another, There is Honour Indeed. And yet, the Honour thus *Descended*, and thus *Adorned*, does not stand Alone, but in a Happy Union with the Honour of *Episcopacy*, and That Episcopal Honour This day risen, in it's *Duration*, to the Meridian of a Century, and shining forth in it's Full Strength. Abundant Reason have we to Rejoyce under the Benign Aspect of the *Mitre* and the *Coronet* in Conjunction, a Conjunction which hath Seldom appeared in the World. A Few Persons indeed of Noble Descent are recorded amongst the Bishops of the First Ages: But of Some we know Little more than their Names; and the Account of Others is, that Their Enjoyment of this Double Honour was but Short.

Short. It Rested upon the Great *St. Basil*, but a little more than Eight Years, before he followed his *Noble* and *Pious* Ancestours to the Mansions of Glory Above. May the Sun bring many Returns of This Joyful and Memorable Day, before the Like Event ariseth in This Place!

So *Many* and so *Great* Blessings hath Heaven bestowed upon this *Honourable*, and *Venerable* Person.

Indeed in That Church, which hath added *Covetousness* to it's Other Idolatries, and so Aggrandized it's Spiritual Stations, that *Many Mighty* and *Many Noble* are Tempted to Press into Them, Episcopacy, Secular Honours, and Vast Treasures do often meet together. But in the *Catholic* Church of *Christ*, Before They of the *Roman* Communion, by Unwarrantable Tenets and Practices, Separated from it, and Since We have, by Relinquishing Them, been Re-united to it, *All* These Blessings have scarce even been Found Centring in *One* man, and in the same Degrees of Perfection and Duration, as in This Illustrious Person, whom the *King of Heaven* hath thus Blessed, and the

Kings of the Earth have *delighted to Honour.*

What then remains, but that our *Praises and Thanksgivings*, on *His* account and our *Own*, should be succeeded by our *Prayers*, that in Him may be *Fulfilled* All the Promises of God to Good men, and that the Happy Effects of all the Other promises may finally Terminate in the Accomplishment of This: *With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my Salvation.*

Unto God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Power, Dominion and Glory, Henceforth and for Evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N IX.

National Sins Fatal to Prince and People.

I SAM. XII. 25.

*If ye shall still do wickedly; ye shall
be consumed, both ye and your King.*

THIS Important Caution was given by the Prophet *Samuel* to the *Jews*, and was occasion'd by a Remarkable Effect of these odious Qualities in them, the *Ingratitude*, and the *Perverseness*, which stand Distinguish'd by the peculiar Liveliness and Boldness of the Figures, amongst the Images of that People, drawn in the Sacred History.

Their Civil Government had, for many Years, been administred by Judges, according to the Designation of God himself; who had, *many a time*, Deliver'd and Blessed them in an Extraordinary and Miraculous Manner, under that Administration. But they were so far from any just Notions of the Supreme Authority, prescribing this Administration to them; and so far from all Due Regard to the signal Blessings attending it, that, with one Consent, they attempted a direct Violation of it, and obstinately persisted in that Attempt. * *All the Elders of Israel said unto Samuel, Make us a King to judge us, like all the Nations.* This Audacious Invasion upon the Divine Appointment, in assuming an unwarrantable Authority, to Dissolve that Form of Government which they had receiv'd from Heaven, and to substitute a New Scheme in its room, being, by the special Direction of God to the Prophet, fully represented to Them, is conveyed to Posterity, under this Mark

1 Sam. viii. 4, 5.

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of Divine Displeasure stamp'd upon it;
** The Lord said unto Samuel, (and Samuel told all the Words of the Lord unto the People) They have not rejected Thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.*

But neither this strong Admonition, nor yet the subsequent Representation, which God commanded the Prophet to lay before them, of the many Inconveniences which would follow such a Change, as they were bent upon making in their Constitution, was sufficient to give them a Sense of their Duty, or Divert them from their Impious Resolution: *† They said, Nay, but we will have a King over us.*

Thus did they Arrogantly engage in, Impetuously carry on, and, to Extremity, maintain a flagrant Opposition to God; which they so Far succeeded in, that a King was set over them. And soon after he had taken the Government upon him, Samuel, their Old, Faithful, and Affectionate Prophet and Judge took occasi-

* Ver. 7, 10.

† Ver. 19.

on, before a general Assembly, to vindicate his own Unspotted Integrity under his Publick Administration; and to give them a Just Sense of their Past Enormities and Provocations against God; and fully to apprize them of the True and Fundamental Causes and Reasons of their Future Hopes and Fears, in a most Excellent and Moving Oration, which he closeth with the Words of the Text, *If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King.* Which Words may justly challenge most Attentive and Serious Regard from every People and Nation, which hath any Concern for the Prosperity, or Safety of its Prince, or, of it Self; For these two Propositions are Implied in them;

I. *First*, That *National Wickedness*, is the Just Cause of Expecting and Dreading *National Misery*: And,

II. *Secondly*, That the Wickedness of a *People* is a just Cause of the *Sufferings* of their Prince.

These Propositions are so nearly allied to the Rueful Occasion of this Day's Solemnity, that a short Application of them

them will, in the *Third* and *last* Place, naturally and easily flow from them. And I shall entirely confine my Illustration and Application of these Propositions to a *Religious* View of them; not allowing my self the Liberty of entring into any *Political* Disquisitions or Remarks, consider'd purely as *Such*, but leaving these, as they ought to be left, to the Thoughts and Resolutions of those Persons, whose Superiour Faculties Enable them, and whose peculiar Province Requires them, to Weigh and Determine all such Points with Propriety and Advantage.—The

I. Proposition to be consider'd, is, That *National Wickedness* is the Just Cause of Expecting and Dreading *National Misery*.

Indeed such a Proposition as This, or however the Principal Reasons of it, might, in the Days of Old, have been grating in the Ears of one Particular, Fanciful Sect of Men, and those rank'd under the Honourable Title of *Philosophers* too, who employ'd their Roving Heads in finding out a Way, to account for the *Formation* of a World, without a *God*,

a *God*, and for the *Government* of it without A *Superintending Providence*. And, though they fail'd of *Demonstrating* what they *Design'd*; yet they have *Undesignedly* and *Casually* left Another *Demonstration* behind them, A clear *Demonstration*, that their *Want* of *True Sense*, and *Solid Judgment*, did Faithfully keep pace with their *Want* of *True Piety*. For all Men who have *Thought Properly* and *Regularly*, as Men ought to *Think*; who have assigned, not the *Starts of Imagination*, but the *Dictates of sound Reason*, for the *Foundations of Serious and Close Argument*, have, with one *Consent*, *Determin'd* and *Established* the *Truth* and the *Consequences of Opinions*, directly opposed to the *Strains of this wild Philosophy*.

And if we should *Resolve the Proposition* before us, into the *Principles*, upon which it is *Grounded*; every *Man's own Mind* will be found sufficient to draw out a clear *Conviction* for it self, from the *Reasons and Relations of Things*, That there must be a *Necessary, Self-existent Being*, a *God*, the *Creatour and Governour*

nour of the World, and 'tis utterly Impossible to be otherwise; That his own *Honour* is the *Ultimate End* of Creation and Government; That A *Dutiful Regard* to his Authority and Honour is the only Just Title which a Nation can have to his *Favour*; That his *Favour* is the sole Tenure, under which *Protection* and *Happiness* are Granted or Continued to a People; That the *Contempt* of him, or *Opposition* to him, is a Direct *Forfeiture* of that Favour; and Therefore, That a Kingdom, which fixeth it self in a Posture of *Rebellion* against him, becomes Justly Liable to be *Distress'd*, or *Destroyed* by him.

And when the Proof of this Proposition, so manifestly rising from the Suggestions and Reasonings of our own Minds, does not Introduce a suitable Influence and Efficacy upon the Behaviour of Humane Societies, God is wont to give them a Further Cogent Proof of it, The Demonstration of his Severe *Judgments* falling upon them. And the First Instance, given in Scripture of such Direful Proof, would have been the Finishing one, and Intirely

Intirely have prevented all Future Occasions and Possibility of Addition to it, if *Righteous Noah* had not *found grace in the eyes of the Lord*, and Therefore a Remnant of Men been spared, for a Further Tryal of Obedience to their Maker. And might it not have been Reasonably expected, that such a significant Memorial as this, would Remain, as an Effectual Guard upon the Duty of Mankind, and Supersede the Necessity of any other Corrections or Admonitions for ever?

But the Event fell vastly short of all Reasonable Expectation: Otherwise, the Holy Scriptures had not abounded, as they do, with Reproofs, and Threatnings, and Testimonies of Divine vengeance Decreed against Rebellious Nations, and particularly the *Jews*: All which are *written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the World are come*. And so Complete and Satisfactory is this Instruction, that the Special *Reasons* of National Calamity cannot Easily Now escape our Knowledge, nor become the Matter of Pure Conjecture, nor the Ground of Doubtful Disputation; but a Suffering State

State may, under the Light of this Instruction, usually read the Reasons of it's own Fate, in the Reasons and Measures of its own Conduct; And the same Light, which lays open the Secret Springs of Past or Present Sufferings, in every Kingdom, does Therefore manifestly display the Necessary and Effectual Means of Future Preservation. The *Particular Causes* of Publick Judgments are so Distinctly Exemplified in the Sufferings of the *Jews*, or of Other People, recorded in the Sacred History, and so Accurately described by the Prophets, that They stand as so many visible, Eminent Seamarks, kindly Warning every Kingdom, to keep at a Distance from those several Rocks, which must, otherwise, unavoidably Dash them in pieces.

Such Instances therefore transmitted to us in the History, and such Descriptions given by the Prophets, are, at once, an Abundant Proof of the Proposition which is now under our Thoughts, and of God's Compassionate provision for the safety of Generations to come.

The Ruins of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* are

are such Horrid Monuments of God's Indignation against *Popular Impurity*, that, surely, the most Intrepid, or the most Lethargick Man alive, cannot turn his Eyes towards them, without Shivering and Shrinking under the very First appearance of them. And, lest the Peculiar, Aggravating, Monstrous *Circumstance* of that Sin, in those wretched People, should be groundlessly esteemed the Only Cause of the Dangers and Destruction proceeding from it; the *Holy Spirit* hath given us Plain and Ample Testimonies, that when the Sin, though not attended with That *Circumstance*, prevails Epidemically, 'tis Fatal and Destructive to the Publick; A remarkable Instance whereof I shall have occasion of mentioning Below.

Indeed 'tis not to be doubted, but that, after all the Bulwarks, which are, or can be raised in the Defence of Virtue, there may be, under any Government, a great many vicious Persons, who can find means of creeping through the most Compacted Bounds and Restraints put upon them, and of managing some

Heinous

Heinous Offences, so Dextrously and Successfully, as to steal on, Uninterrupted and Undiscover'd, to the Accomplishment of their own Perdition; And yet, in the Judgment of God, They may not perhaps be found of Weight enough, to Sink the *Community*, together with Themselves. For it seems Evident, from the Holy Scripture, that *National Guilt*, and the Consequent Obnoxiousness to *National Punishment*, can only Then be justly assign'd and Imputed to a People, Either, when there are such Varieties and Complications of Wickedness in it, that the Omniscient God, who at once Distinctly knows the Qualities and Conditions of every Individual Person, does look upon the Kingdom as Immersed in a State of *Universal Depravity*, such as the Holy Spirit represents in the *First Chapter of Isaiah*: Where 'tis said of the *Jews*, *A sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity; — the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: — from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; Or, when Particular*

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Sins,

Sins, found in it, may be properly esteemed *National Sins*. And Then may *Particular Sins* be accounted *National*, and therefore the Causes of National Misery, Either, when they have the Direct Sanction of Publick Authority; Or, when They are Unanimously espoused and embraced by the Society, though they have no Formal Sanction from Publick Authority; Or, when the Contagion and Prevalence of Them amongst the People is become *General*, though not strictly Universal; Or, when the *Occasions* and *Circumstances* of them are so Conspicuous and Flagrant, that their Rise, or Progress, or Continuance may be properly imputed to the Concurrence, or Approbation, or Connivence of the State.

Under the First of these Observations may be ranged the Description and the Decision of *Jeremiah's Case*, in the *xxvith Chapter* of his Prophecy. This Holy Man, fixed by the Spirit of God in an Elevation of Soul, far above the Reach or Influence of all Worldly Hopes and Fears, being Faithful to God, and Faithful to his Country, in the Discharge of his Du-

ty, Honestly and Plainly denounced, as God required him, that if his Country would not be *obedient*, it must be *A Curse, and Desolate without Inhabitant*; Whereupon, the *People* and the *Priests* and the *Prophets* took so Unjust and Unhappy a Turn of Thought, were so Incensed by this Message from Heaven, instead of being Obsequious to it, that they Immediately Apprehended the Messenger of God, and said unto him, *Thou shalt surely die*. Upon this Occasion the *Princes* were assembled, and strenuous Application was made to Them, that he should be condemned to Death. But when the Prosecution was so far advanced, the Prophet Asserted his Divine Mission, and under the Direction of the Holy Spirit, made an open Declaration, that, if the Government should decree his Death, the Ruin of the Government it self must be the inevitable Consequence of that Decree; *As for me, behold I am in your hand: do with me, as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon your selves, and upon this city, and*

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upon

upon the Inhabitants thereof. And the *Princes and People*, more Regardful of Religion, than the False, Soothing *Priests* and *Prophets*, acquitted *Jeremiah*, and saved the Community from the Imputation of National Guilt, and the Infliction of National Punishment.

To the Next of these Rules of Interpreting National Sins may be Reduced that Memorable Instance of *Murmuring*, which prevailed amongst the *Israelites*, * *about the matter of Korah.* For when *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*, and two hundred and fifty *Princes of the Assembly*, famous in the congregation, men of Renown, had most Insolently Opposed and Violated God's Positive Institutions of Sacred Things, and not only Perished in the Attempt, but Perished under the most Astonishing *Circumstances of Death*; This Great Event was so far from making Useful and Lasting Impressions upon the People, that, the very Next day, they adventured to Joyn, with Universal consent, in Expressing an Angry Resentment

* Numb. xvi.

of so Manifest and Extraordinary a *Judgment*; and, for this Provocation, God Immediately sent a Plague amongst them.

To the Rule of interpreting National Sins, by the *General Prevalence* of them, are Reducible all those Passages in the *fifth Chapter of Isaiab*, and other places of Holy Scripture, where the Sins of *Oppression, Perverting of Judgment, Covetousness, Bribery, Drunkenness, and Luxury*, are assigned as Genuine Causes of great Tribulations falling upon the *Jews*. And in this Class may also be found those *Corruptions* of God's *Holy Word*, which are charged, in Different Respects, both upon the *People* and *Prophets*, and given in amongst the chief Reasons of Publick Calamity. Thus are the * *People* warmly accused, and Keen are the Menaces annex'd to this Accusation, *This is a Rebellious People, lying Children, Children that will not hear the Law of the Lord; which say to the Seers, see not; and to the Prophets prophesy not unto us right Things, speak unto us smooth*

* Isa. xxx. 8, &c.

Things, propheſy Deceits. The People were ſo far from believing ſtedfaſtly and Acquieſcing intirely, as they ought to have believed and Acquieſced in *Divine Truth*, that they were Uneaſy under the very Representations of it; and that Uneaſineſs grew up into an utter Averſion to it; and that Averſion became ſo ſtrong in them, that they Inſiſted upon having it intirely Concealed from them, or at leaſt Miſrepresented to them, and Deceitfully Smooth'd over, and Adapted to their Vitiated Palates, that it might Ruffle them no more, nor give them any further Diſtaſte or Diſturbance. And the Unfaithfulneſs of the *Prophets* was equal to the Impiety of the People. For * they are in various Texts deſcrib'd as Inexcuſably Violating their Duty, and Ingratiating themſelves with the State, for their own Temporal Advantage, by uttering Lies and Deceit, and by concealing *Neceſſary Truths*, and by Diſtorting, Colouring and Diſguiſing, Softening,

* Comp. Jer. v. 31. Ch. xiv. 14, 15, 16, 17. xxiii. 14, 15, &c. xxvii. 9, 18. xxviii. Ezek. xxii. 25-28.

Smoothing and Defacing the *Word of God*, just as the People would have them. So closely were the *People* and the *Prophets* combined in Provoking God's Indignation against them, by putting the Highest Indignity and Contempt upon the Excellency and Authority of Divine Truth.

Under the last Rule of Interpreting National Wickedness, which relates to the Approbation or Connivence of the Government, may be brought a Signal Instance out of the *Fifth Chapter of Jeremiah*; wherein we find Miseries denounced against the *Jews*, under these Emphatical expressions; *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* And 'tis a Principal Article in the Previous charge drawn against them, a Principal Reason of the Visitation and Vengeance thus denounced, that *they assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses*. And can there be a stronger Evidence than is here given, that a Kingdom, wherein the Spirit of Piety and Virtue is sunk so wretchedly

Low, that it can Patiently suffer the great Fences of Modesty to be Publickly thrown down, and Debauchery to make a Notorious Inroad into Troops, and full Assemblies, is the Just Object of *Divine Vengeance*, and must either be Reformed, or expect to be Destroyed?

I shall add but One instance more, for the Proof and Illustration of the First Proposition; but 'tis an Instance, wherein all the Rules of Measuring and Determining National Wickedness do seem to Center and Unite. And this flaming Instance is the Condemnation and Crucifixion of our Blessed Saviour; concerning which 'tis to be observed, that as No Nation ever was, or can be Guilty of Wickedness Equal to it, so no Nation ever Fell under the Weight of Calamities, equal to Those which were the Consequence of it, * *Great tribulation, such as was not, since the beginning of the World to this Time; no, nor ever shall be.*

To the Consideration of the Terrible Effects, which National Wickedness brings

* Matt. xxiv. 21.

upon the *Community*, may be added the consideration of Those, which are derived from the same Fountain upon the *Prince* himself. And these are observable under the

II. Proposition implied in the Text, namely, That the Wickedness of a *People* is a Just cause of the Sufferings of their *Prince*.

The Destruction, here denounced against the *King*, bears no Manner of Relation to his own Personal Qualities or Demeanour; but is represented as the Pure Effect, under God's Judgment, of *Wickedness* prevailing among the *People*. And the *Reasons* of such a Divine Dispensation are not so Obscure and Abstruse, but that they may Easily be recollected and set in a clear Light; nor are the Principal ones so many, but that they may be brought within a very Narrow Compass. of Illustration. And a much Narrower Compass still would be sufficient to contain all *Instances* of this Dispensation, which are recorded in the History of the *Jews*. For, notwithstanding their Wonderful and Unparallel'd

parallel'd Excesses in Wickedness; the Sufferings and Destruction of their *Kings* may, Generally be accounted for, and very plainly too, without charging them upon the Sins of the *People*.

The Case of King *Josiah* indeed may here particularly demand our Notice; because it both seems, as a Proper *Instance*, to Illustrate the Proposition before us, and also to carry along with it a Plain *Reason* of the Divine dispensation. The Virtues and Excellencies of this Prince are displayed, under a Multitude of Particulars, in the History of his Administration; and the Short Character given of him is this, That * *like unto him was there no King before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.* And yet this Prince, Virtuous and Pious, Accomplished and Adorned as he was, run into such Circumstances, under Providential permission, † if not under

* 2 Kings xxiii. 25. † See 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22.

some Stronger Effect of Providence, than pure *Permission*, that he fell by the Hands of Enemies in Battle.

The *Reason* of this Event, appearing in the History, relates to the Sinful state of the *Kingdom*, whereby God was provoked to determine and declare, That his **Wrath should be kindled against it, and not be quenched, and that it should become a Desolation and a Curse.* And after this Manifestation of the Certain Vengeance decreed against the Sinful Kingdom, God is pleased thus to Express himself to Good *Josiah*, *I will gather thee unto thy Fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy Grave in Peace,* (i. e. most Probably, *Before the Peace and Quiet of the Kingdom be followed by the Confusion and Desolation denounced against it; which Interpretation seems to be suggested in the next Words,*) *and thine Eye shall not see all the Evil, which I will bring upon this Place.* And God, who seeing Future things as perspicuously as Things present, and therefore see-

* 2 Kings xxii. 17, 19.

ing the *Circumstances* of this Prince's Death, before they Actually Arose, as Distinctly, as when they did Actually arise, spoke of his suffering Death, as of a Matter of Favour, must be understood to speak of it, as attended with Those Circumstances; and that Seeming Destruction, but Real Favour to his Person was occasion'd, by the *National Sins*, and the Dreadful Punishments which were to ensue.

When a Prince is Deeply affected with a Sense of God's Honour, and Tenderly Sollicitous for the Good of his People; Then must their Superfluity of Naughtiness *Vex his righteous Soul from day to day*, and his Translation into the Celestial Regions of Purity is the most Effectual, if not his Only Effectual Relief from that Continual Vexation; And that Relief is the more Acceptable, because it secures him from the Sight of their approaching *Miseries*, which would Greatly Aggravate the Anguish he feels under the Sight of their *Sins*. And when They are become *obdurate* in Wickedness, and That Wickedness hurries them on, to Harrahs,
and

and Oppress, and Persecute their Prince, insomuch that nothing less than *Irresistible Grace*, which is never granted, would prevail with Them to desist from their Barbarous Treatment of Him, and the Torments of his Life must, without a Miracle, be as Lasting as Life itself; Then the Divine favour towards him, Demonstrated in his Death, under whatsoever Circumstances, adjusted by Divine Wisdom, is not only occasion'd by the *Violence*, and *Tyranny*, and other Iniquities of his People, but may be, according to the ordinary Course of Things, the Only certain Means of his Deliverance from them.

And this Reason of the Divine Dispensation, God's *Favour* to the *Prince*, under the outward Appearance of suffering, is attended with Another Reason of it, relating to the *People* themselves, and That is, Their being Depriv'd of a Blessing, which their Iniquities have provok'd God to withdraw from Them. And, under this Consideration, it seems highly Reasonable to grant, that by how much Greater the *Wickedness* of a *People*,
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ple, and the *Excellencies* of their *Prince* are, by so much the Greater is their Danger of Losing him: And the Removal of so Great Happiness from Them, is a Chief End of Divine Justice and Wisdom in such an Event. For 'tis observable in Relation to the *Person* of the Prince, that the Equitable and the Gracious Disposal of Him will, after the Favour of his Present Deliverance, be abundantly provided for another Way, and in Another and more glorious Kingdom. The fundamental Reason of such Incidents depends upon the Notions and Nature of *Human Society*, as such, and the Different Relations of Man, to *This* and a *Future State*.

The Circumstances of any Man's Life upon Earth, and the Circumstances of his *Death*, are a Trifle and Unworthy of Regard or Notice, when Compared with the great *End* and Purpose of his Creation, his *Final*, and *Immutable*, and *Eternal State*. And therefore many *Private* Persons, excelling in Virtue do, in a Subserviency to the wise Methods of Providence, frequently pass through the
World,

World, under a Weight of Afflictions, next to Insupportable. And all Serious and Judicious Men, taking the Consideration of a *Future State* into the Account of These Cases, do Unanimously Approve and allow the Just and Clear Reasons of them, though they do not much affect the State of Mankind, consider'd as a *Community*; which, in the Examples of Suffering *Princes*, Implies *Additional* Reasons, and those of great Weight under the Argument before us. For since the Punishments of Mankind, under the Capacity and Notion of a *Society*, are Peculiar to This State, and must Finally Terminate with it; And since the Circumstances of a *Prince* are of such vast Moment to the Publick Society, that God's Dispensations to the One do Directly, and Principally affect the Other; Therefore the Sufferings of a *Good Prince*, especially, when they prove the effectual *Means* and *Instruments* of reducing a Disobedient, *Profligate People* to Destruction, or great Distress, are most Reasonable Administrations in the Governour of the World, and the Just Consequences of *National Sins*.

But

But the Length, to which this Discourse is now run, Forbids my delaying any longer, to draw up a Short Application of it to the Rueful Occasion of the Present Solemnity.

And it seems Natural to observe, That the Proof, which hath been offer'd, that the Sins of the *People* are a Just Cause of the Sufferings of a *Prince*, is the Proper Rule of Accounting for the *Martyrdom* commemorated this Day. For after all the Cruel Labours, which have been used, to Deface and Violate the *True Images* and Representations of the *Martyr*; To Demolish his Virtues, and improve his Infirmities, Infirmities scarce Separable from Man, into Vices of the first Magnitude; Utterly to Stifle, or bury in Oblivion, the *Redress* of Grievances, and the Satisfaction made for them, and to Inflamm the Remembrance of the *Grievances* Themselves, as if they had never been Redressed at all; To transform *Surmises* of Mischiefs expected, or Pretended to be expected from him, into clear Demonstrations, that they were Intended by him; and to rivet those Deformities

mities into his Character, which were never found in his Person; It still remains Evident, and cannot be Denied by any Equal and Impartial Judge of the History, that he Abounded in True Virtue and Religion, and that there was Nothing in his Qualities or Administration, which bore any Proportion to his Sufferings, or can be assigned for a Just Reason of Accounting for them.

But when we Change the Prospect, and an Amazing Change of Prospect it is, from the Beauteous Innocence of the *Prince*, to the Ghastly state of Iniquities in the *People*; the Reason of His Fate does Immediately rise in our view. Even Their *Deliberate Purposes* to Destroy the Lord's Anointed, and their *Persisting* Resolutely and Immoveably in those Purposes, and in the Concerted Measures of carrying them on to Accomplishment and Execution, were *Themselves* such Horrible Enormities, as might Justly Provoke God to permit the Execution and Accomplishment of them, that so Rebellious a People might fall into the *Pit which they had made*, and Perish in

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their own Folly. And to this it might be added, if there were Room, or Necessity for adding it, and confirming it by an Enumeration of Particulars, That there are not Many of the Fundamental, *Essential* Principles of the Christian Religion, whether relating to Faith or Practice, but what were, in That Unhappy Time, Rejected, or Perverted and Violated, by Men of One Denomination, or Other. But it may perhaps be no Inconsiderable branch of Compassion towards Them, to Avoid descending into a more Particular Account of Them. And if any one should be desirous of saying the Highest things that can be said, of the True *Greatness* and *Firmness* of Mind, and Spirit of *Goodness*, which shone forth Illustriously in our Suffering King: Let it be said, That They were Equal to the *Debasement*, and *Impiety*, and *Iniquity* of the *People*, which Devised, and Executed those Sufferings upon Him.

But the obligations of Duty to God, and to my Country will not suffer me to Close this Discourse, without this Further observation from it; That the most
Useful

Useful, and Effectual Evidence, which Faithful Subjects can give, of their Fidelity and Loyalty to the King, and of their Sincere and Ardent Love of their Country, consists in their Sincere and Sedulous Endeavours, as their Various Capacities require or allow them, to Defend and Promote the Honour of God, the *Supreme* Governour and Judge of Humane Society. For This Consequence seems Necessarily to arise from what hath been said, That the Stability and Glories of the *Throne* are never to be Intirely Depended on, Unless *Virtue* and *Religion*, in Those who stand Below, be the Supporters of it. And it appears, to a Demonstration, in the *History* of the *Jews*, and from the Express *Declarations* of God's Holy Spirit, that the Prosperity of a Nation does Usually Rise or Fall, in Proportion to the Provisions which it makes for the *Security* and *Propagation* of Religion:

That an Universal and Inviolable *Concern* for God's Honour Demonstrated by Effectual *Provisions* for the Preservation and Advancement of our *Holy Religion*,

may Ever remain Here, as the Firm and Immoveable Foundation of the Prosperity and Happiness of the Kingdom, God of his Infinite mercy grant, by the Influence of his Holy Spirit upon us, and our Posterity, through *Jesus Christ*, our Blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and One God, be all Honour and Glory, Power and Dominion henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

A Discourse of Murther.

EXOD. XX. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THOSE Natural Impreſſions and Obligations of Moral Duty, which immediately relate to the *Preſervation of Humane Life*, are, in ſo Peculiar a manner, Strong guards upon it, that ſurely it muſt be a very Powerful Temptation, which is able to break through Them. Other Sins do more eaſily Prevail over us, becauſe they are Agreeable and Pleaſing to our Corrupt Inclinations and Diſpoſitions; But, Corrupted as our Nature is, there is ſomething ſtill ſo ſhocking to us in the Sin of *Murther*, that a Man muſt undergo as much Struggle and

Self-Denial in Complying with This kind of Temptation, as he usually feels in Resisting Others. The Utmost Violence must be offer'd to his own *Disposition*, before he can prevail with himself to offer Violence to his Own, or to his Neighbour's *Life*. The very Thoughts of this Ghastly Sin do Startle, and Distract, and Distort the Soul; which Recoils and flies back from them with Confusion and Detestation. And, lest any thing should be wanting, which could render these Strong Bonds of Duty still more Inviolable, God hath been pleased to Confirm and Inforce the Voice of *Nature*, by this Express *Revealed Law*,

Thou shalt not kill; In discoursing of which it will be necessary,

I. First, *To Adjust the Latitude or Extent of the Commandment*, and

II. Secondly, *To represent the Guilt, and Danger, which Men incur by the Transgression of it*.

I. *It will be necessary to Adjust the Latitude or Extent of the Precept*. For, as there are some Instances of Murther, which are not Universally Allowed to be
Such,

Such, and which are wont to be Palliated under various Pretences, and False Colours of Vindication; so, on the other Hand, there are some Cases, wherein one Man may Violently take away another Man's Life, without any Violation of the Commandment in the Text.

The Lawfulness of doing This, in the Case of *Self-Preservation*, is so Certain and Obvious, that it can scarce admit of any Mistake, so long as this Necessary Caution is observed, That a Man should not presently invade his Neighbour's Life, upon every Little *Suspicion* or *Appearance* of Danger to himself, though he may Innocently do it, when the Danger is *Manifest*, and when he must, Unavoidably, either Give or Receive the Fatal Stroke.

The Lawfulness of *War* likewise, upon some Occasions, and under certain Restrictions and Regulations, is plainly Warranted by the Authority of Holy * Scripture, as well as by the Nature

* The Texts are numerous. See particularly *Deut. xx.* and compare *1 Sam. xv. 2, 3, 13, 18.* And what is thus plainly Approv'd and Directed in the Old Testament, is perfect-

and Reasons of Things, and the Situation and Circumstances of Humane Affairs; wherein it frequently becomes Impossible for a State or Kingdom, to support and maintain its Just Rights, or even sometimes to Preserve it self, or its Allies, from *utter Ruin*, by any other means than *Hostility*.

And equally needless must it be to prove, that * *Magistrates* are invested with a Just Authority to inflict Capital Punishments upon Offenders, unless any Man could be supposed Ignorant enough to want a Proof, that Magistrates are the Representatives and Vicegerents of God, in the Societies of Men; or, that it is Just, to cut off the Corrupted Members of the Body *Politick*, as well as *Natural*, for the Preservation and Benefit of the Whole.

Abundantly clear is the Innocence of That Person also, who, through Pure

ly Agreeable to the Gospel. Texts noted to this Purpose, by St. *Austin*, and afterwards by *Scholastic Writers*, and since Them, by the Learned Bishop *Andrews* and other Judicious English Authors, are *Matth. viii. 10. Luke iii. 14. Matth. xxii. 21.*

* *Exod. xxi. 23. xxii. 18. Deut. xix. 21. xxii. 24. Act. xxv. 10, 11. Rom. xiii. 4.*

Ignorance

Ignorance, or Unforeseen and Unavoidable *Accident*, deprives another of his Life. For an Action which has no Foundation in the *Will* and Intention of the Agent, is not properly a *Moral Action*, and cannot consequently be Criminal. And therefore under the Mosaical Dispensation, a Sanctuary was, by Divine Appointment *, provided for every one who was so Innocently Unfortunate, as to kill his Neighbour *Ignorantly and at unawares*, lest the *Avenger of Blood* should pursue and slay him, before his Innocence could be sufficiently clear'd up.

Indeed the Justification of *Abraham*, in Designing and Attempting to Sacrifice his Son, does not fall Directly under any of these Reasons or Observations, but Depends upon Circumstances which were Peculiar to his own Person; and such as never were, nor ever can be drawn out into a Precedent, or with any Colour of Reason, be assigned as a Vindication of any Private Person, who should make an Attempt upon his Neighbour's Life: This

* Exod. xxi. 13. Deut. xix. 2--10. Numb. xxxv. 10.

Friend and Favourite of God, who had so frequent and familiar Communications with Him, could not Possibly be Mistaken in his Call to This Extraordinary Enterprize; but was Undoubtedly and Infallibly Convinced, by *Clear Revelation* made to him, that God did Directly and Immediately Require him to * *Offer Isaac for a Burnt-Offering*: Otherwise, the Holy † Scriptures would never have been so Full and Remarkable as they are in Testifying, that his Readiness to perform this Sacrifice was a most Excellent and Acceptable Instance of his Faith, and Obedience to God.

But whatsoever *Private Person*, without Supernatural Manifest *Revelation*, (and such Extraordinary Revelations, 'tis universally agreed, are now long since ceased) and not *Ignorantly* or *Accidentally*, but *Knowingly* and *Designedly*, and that without any *Necessity* arising from the Imminent, and, otherwise, Unavoidable Danger of his own Destruction, does take away or invade his Neighbour's Life,

* Gen. xxii. 2. † Gen. xxii. 12, 16, 17, 18. Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. Jam. ii. 21, 22, 23.

is chargeable with the Guilt of the Sin forbidden in the Text. And this Imputation of Murther falls properly upon Them who so deprive their Neighbour of his Life either by Open Assault and Violence, or by Stratagem and Secret Contrivance; either by shedding his Blood Themselves, or by Engaging other Hands to be Imbrued in it; either by Acting as Principals or Accessaries; either by Command, or by Persuasion; either by Threatning or Encouragement; either by Direct Concert and Consultation, or by Suggestions and Insinuations; either by bearing False Witness against him, in their own Persons, or by their Subordination of Others; or, Finally, by any Instruments, or Means, or Methods whatsoever, which are not allowed by Divine Authority. For All Such do evidently fall under the Prohibition now before us. And hence it will follow in the

Second Place, that every Person, who knowingly and wilfully *destroys his own Life*, is guilty of Murther. For he hath no Colour of Allowance from Divine Authority, to become the Author or Cause

Cause of his own Death. We are not, strictly speaking, the Proprietors of our own Lives, and Therefore may not Dispose of them, ourselves, at Pleasure. God only, who Gave them, hath a Right to take them away again; and by Consequence, every Man, who offers Violence to his own Life, does manifestly Invade the Prerogative, and Usurp the Right and Authority of God.

Thirdly, Duels are Direct Violations of the Commandment. And the Truth of this Proposition is grounded upon the Principle already laid down. For Duels are undoubtedly to be rank'd in the Number of those Violent Attempts upon Humane Life, which are not Allowed by Divine Authority; And, Therefore, the Guilt of Murder is Chargeable upon the Persons engaging in them. The Liberty allowed to a Private Man of destroying his Neighbour's Life, without the Sanction of Publick Authority, is confined, both by the Natural and Revealed Law, purely and solely, to the Case of Self-Preservation. But the Plea of Self-Preservation is utterly Foreign to the Condition and Circum-

stances

stances of Him, who Formally Gives or Accepts a *Challenge*. And he adds to the Sin of making an Unnecessary Attempt upon his *Neighbour's Life*, by throwing himself unnecessarily into the utmost Danger of losing his own. Nor is it any Just Plea or Vindication of Men who thus Expose their Lives, That their Attempt upon each other is founded upon their *Mutual Consent* and Permission, and that neither of them takes any other Liberty with his Adversary, than what his Adversary freely gives: And the Reason, why no Just Vindication of them can be drawn from such Notions as these, how plausible soever they may seem, is This, That since God is the Sole Proprietor of every Man's Life, and no Man is the Absolute Lord of himself, or, has any Right to dispose of his own Life, and to determine the Duration of it Himself; Therefore no Man can Lawfully Transfer the Disposal of it to Another.

Fourthly, The Commandment extends it self in the True *Spiritual Purpose* of it, and according to the Application and Interpret-

Interpretation given of it by our Saviour and his Apostles, not only to our *Actions*, but to our *Words*, and to the Secret *Intentions* and *Affections* of our Hearts. For our Blessed Lord expressly applies it to the Several Degrees, and Various Effects of Causeless *Anger*, breaking forth in Contumelious and Reproachful Language; and in St. *John's* Account, *Hatred* is *Murder*, and inconsistent with the Hopes of Heaven. * *Whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer; and ye know, that no Murderer hath Eternal Life abiding in him.*

From this View of the *Latitude* or *Extent* of the Commandment, I proceed

II. *To represent the Guilt and Danger which Men incur by the Transgression of it.*

And if the Measure of this Transgression should be taken either from the *Indignity*, thereby offer'd unto God, or, from the *Injury* done to *Man*, or, from the Punishments expressly *Denounced* against it, or, from the Anguish and Horror of

* 1 John iii. 15.

the *Bodeings* which 'tis apt to leave upon the Mind, we should find Abundant Reason to assign it a Place amongst the Loudest of Crying Sins. The First Instance of Murther in the World was followed close by Perplexity, Oppression of Spirit, and the intolerable Gnawings of Despair it self. *My Punishment* (said the Abandon'd Fugitive) *is greater than I can bear;* or rather, *Mine Iniquity is greater than that it can be forgiven.* And it follows, *every one that findeth me shall slay me:* 'Twas a Dismal, but natural Apprehension, which his Guilt suggested to his Thoughts, That the whole Creation must surely be alarm'd upon such an Occasion, and stand Ready to Execute Vengeance on him. And that Weight of Confusion, which Natural Conscience scarce ever fails of laying upon such Sinners, must needs be vastly increased by the Severe Expressions of God's Indignation against them; *The Lord Abhors the Blood-thirsty.* Attonements and Means of Satisfaction, were in several Other Instances, provided by Divine Institution for the Sins of the People, and that sometimes when they were

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Heinous and highly Provoking. But God hath expressly forbid the shewing any Mercy or Compassion to a *Murderer*, and the taking any Satisfaction for his Life. * *If any Man hate his Neighbour, and lie in Wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him Mortally that he Die—the Elders shall deliver him into the Hand of the Avenger of Blood that he may die: Thine Eye shall not Pity him. † Moreover, ye shall take no Satisfaction for the Life of a Murderer, but he shall be surely put to Death.* Not the Cities of Refuge, not the Holy Altar of God, (a Sanctuary of all others the most Sacred and Inviolable) was Privileged to exempt from Punishment Such an Unpardonable Offender: ‡ *If a Man come presumptuously upon his Neighbour, to slay him with Guile, thou shalt take him from mine Altar that he may die.* And when the Irreversible Sentence of Death is pronounced upon him, this Remarkable Reason of it is subjoyned, §§ *For in the Image of God made he Man.* Contempt of God is the

* Deut. xix. 11. † Numb. xxxv. 31. ‡ Exod. xxi. 14.
 §§ Gen. ix. 6.

Great Aggravation of Sin; and Murth-ers carry up this Aggravation to a Height Peculiar to themselves. Not Satisfied with trampling upon his Laws, or assuming his Dominion, they offer, as much as in them lies, an Outrage to his very Being, by Defacing and Destroying the Only Image of Himself which he hath Impressed upon the Visible World. And there are Peculiarities of Aggravation in the Injury done to *Man*, as well as in the Indignity hereby offer'd to *God*. Other Injuries may be Repair'd, or admit of some Compensation; But This is utterly Irreparable. Other Injuries may rob a Man of his Estate, or Reputation, or of some Particular Temporal Satisfaction and Advantages; But This is the Summary of Mischiefs, and Deprives him, once for all, of Every Temporal Benefit and Satisfaction whatsoever. And who can tell, but that this Injury may prove Fatal to the Sufferer's Soul, as well as his Body, and at once involve him in the *First* and *Second* Death, by depriving him of that *Space to Repent*, which may be Necessary, and might have been Suf-

ficient to the Accomplishment of his Salvation? Or, if the Injury should not follow the Sufferer into a Future State, if it should not fall upon him under a State of Impenitence, or press him down into Everlasting Destruction, yet must the Weight of it, even in Relation to his View of that Eternal State, into which he is passing, fall heavily upon him.

For who can bear the Thoughts of being thrown Hastily and Headlong into the other World, instead of moving thither through the Common Course of Nature and Providence? Who is not exceedingly desirous of going down to the Grave in Peace and Quiet? The Wise Virgins themselves, though they had their Oyl ready, found it Necessary, upon the Approach of the Bridegroom, to Trim their Lamps. Even the Best of Men would be glad of a few Leisure Minutes at the Last, Deliberately to Review and mourn over their Miscarriages and Defects; would be glad of a little Calm and Undisturbed Space of Time in the Conclusion of their Lives, to Adorn their Souls, and prepare them for their

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Immediate Appearance before the Glorious and Unspotted Presence of God. And if these Circumstances be so highly Advantageous and Desireable; how Grievous and Grating must That Injury be, which Deprives Men of Them?

Such is the Guilt, and Such the Danger attending the Transgression of the Commandment in the Text, in the first Instance of it, as it signifies *Willful Murther*, in the common Acceptation of it, or, the *Offering Unlawful Violence to our Neighbour's Life*.

Secondly, Let us Consider the *Special* Reasons of the Guilt and Danger of Those Persons who *Destroy their own Lives*. It hath been prov'd above, that they are Transgressours against this Commandment, and it would therefore be needless to shew, that they are involved in the Guilt, and consequently obnoxious to the Punishment of *Murther*, in *General*. But they expose themselves, in a Particular Manner, to the *Greater Condemnation*, by some Particular Sentiments and Dispositions, which are commonly the Root and Foundation of this

Unnatural Crime. For, when Men destroy themselves, to avoid or throw off present Sufferings, do they not Tacitly declare, that God shall not dispose of Them, as he pleaseth; that they will resolutely break through that State of Things which he hath determined and Established; that they will not be tied down to such Circumstances as he hath allotted to them; and that they will wrest their Lives out of his Hands, and not suffer him to prolong or protract them beyond the Limits of their Own Good Pleasure. And if this be the Secret Language of their Hearts, what can be expected, but that God should execute the Fiercest of his Vengeance upon them? Or, if Pride and Envy and Ambition have so much Power over their Minds, that they will not bear the Thoughts of that Distance which is betwixt themselves, and those who are placed in a higher Sphere, and they will, in the Abundance of their Arrogance and Resentment, violently remove themselves out of the World, because they are not advanced to a more advantageous Situation in it, what can

can they reasonably expect or imagine, but that they should feel the Weight of *Solomon's* Observation, in the fullest and most Extensive Sense of it; *Prov. xvi. 18. Pride goeth before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall?* A Fall into Eternal as well as Temporal Destruction; a Fall by so much the Deeper and more Dreadful, as the Crimes which give Occasion to it, do more nearly resemble those of that Murderer from the beginning, the Devil, whose Insolence and Ambition threw him headlong out of Heaven into the Lake of Everlasting Fire.

For what Foundation can there be of Hope, that God will forgive a Flagrant Sin, without the Sinner's Repentance? Or, how is it to be conceiv'd, that a Man should Truly Repent of a Sin, which he dies in the very Commission of? The Arguments which have been advanced in Opposition to this Plain Truth are Insignificant and unworthy of Regard. They prove that the Authors of them carried the Notions of Charity beyond all Just Bounds; and That

is the Only Conclusion to be drawn from them, unless this Dangerous Consequence should be added to it, that their Groundless Expressions of Charity towards him who dies in his Sin, may perhaps Encourage Others to follow his Example.

There are some other Sins, besides that of offering direct Violence to a Man's Life, which have usually been accounted Branches of Self Murther, as Intemperance, or the Indulgence of any other Vice, which Impairs the Health, and Destroys the Life. And there are other Aggravations of this Sin, which I forbear to insist on, as being of Less Weight and Moment, than those which I have endeavour'd to Illustrate. And therefore I proceed to represent,

Thirdly, The Guilt and Danger of engaging in *Duels*; which, being Manifest Instances of Wilful Murther, do therefore expose the Persons engaging in them, to the Severities of God's Indignation denounced against it. Those who die in such Engagements, go into the other World, not only Void of Charity (which is absolutely Necessary to their

their Happiness There,) but glowing Hot with Wrath and Fury; And when these Qualities have the Last Possession of their Souls, what Society of Spirits can That be, which their Souls are Qualified to be taken into, and to bear a Part with, for ever and ever? Or, if they should not Immediately perish in the Conflict, yet is their Guilt the Same in the Sight of God, the Searcher of Hearts, who judges of Mens Wicked Attempts, not by the Success or Event of them, but by the Designs and Intentions from which they proceed. And is it worth a Man's While, to run into such a Hazard as this, the Hazard of suffering *Eternal and Unspeakable Misery*, for the Sake of resenting an Affront, or of redressing an Injury, how great soever it may be? Or, is it a Rational Conduct, for the Sake of avoiding a Groundless Imputation of Cowardice, for a Man to run all this Hazard, and testifie his False Courage, by Insulting the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and spending the last Efforts of his Strength and Life, in an Act of Defiance and Rebellion against him that gave them.

'Tis very surprizing, that This Practice which was so far from being allowed, that it was never heard of amongst Persons of High Quality and Good Breeding, or even the lower Ranks of the People, in the Politest Parts of the Heathen World, or indeed in any Nation, till these Later Ages, should at last prevail, and that under the Glorious Light of the Gospel, which we are indispensably required to Obey. If it should be granted, that *Duels* are the only possible Means of redressing some Kinds of Injury, (and surely the Injury cannot be very great which the Laws of Humane Society have taken no Care to Redress) it would by no means hence follow, that Recourse should be had to them, by Those who call themselves *Christians*, and acknowledge the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, wherein it is written, *Avenge not your selves, but rather give Place unto Wrath. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* If the World hath advanced some mistaken Notions, in a Direct Opposition to God and the Gospel, can Those, who espouse

espouse and are acted by such Notions, be Properly number'd amongst the Servants of *Christ*, as if *the Friendship of the World* were not indeed *Enmity with God*, or as if the Holy Spirit intended nothing in prescribing this Rule to All Christians, *Be not Conformed to this World?* Every Man, who professeth the Gospel, is bound, in the Strongest Terms, to an Inviolable Exercise of *Patience* and *Meekness*, and *Forbearance*, in Imitation of our Lord and Saviour, under the various Circumstances and Occurrences of Life. How then should it be thought consistent with his Profession, to run in with the Vogue, and be Governed by those False Notions of Honour which the World hath set up in a full Contradiction to the Fundamental Rules of his Duty? And yet those Notions (agreeably to the Deceitfulness of Sin in other Instances) do Introduce that very Inconvenience, which they pretend to Remove. For whosoever does Faithfully and Constantly adhere to Virtue and the Positive Commands of God and neglects and despiseth all the Imputations and Reflections which are levell'd against him
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on That Account, does give a much Stronger Evidence of the True Greatness and Generosity of Mind than those do, who relinquish their Duty, for the sake of avoiding that Uneasiness, which such Reflections and Imputations bring upon them. Every Man of a Great Mind is Forward in making Allowances for the little Infirmities and Heats of Passion, which are the Unhappiness of Humane Nature, and are apt to rise in Conversation, even sometimes amongst Dearest Friends: Nor is he less forward in making All Lawful Satisfaction for any Injury he hath inadvertently offer'd to his Neighbour; but he cannot be compell'd either to Demand or Grant what is unlawful to be Demanded or Granted, by any Means, or for the Sake of avoiding any Inconveniences, be they ever so Great. To fear *Men* more than *God*, is the most Dishonourable Misapplication and Degeneracy of Fear. To be shaken and beaten off from Obedience by the Uneasy Apprehensions of being Censured for the Faithful Discharge of it; to be Laughed or Frighted out of Necessary

Necessary Duty, is the Undoubted Indication and Property of a Weak, and Little, and Base Spirit, which is not Able to Support, and therefore does readily give up, the most Excellent Ornaments and Accomplishments, when any faint Attempt is made upon Them. Those therefore who engage in Duels, through fear of suffering some little Seeming Calumnies and Reproaches, (for in the Judgment of the best and wisest Men, they are far from being really such) do at once forfeit All just Pretensions to true Honour and Generosity of Mind, and all Claim and Title to Eternal Salvation.

Fourthly and lastly, 'Tis observable of those Intentions and Affections which the Gospel hath reduced to the Prohibition in the Text, that there is this Peculiarity in the Guilt and Danger attending them, That they are the *Immediate* Pollutions of the Soul, and do render it Obnoxious to the Wrath of God, tho' no Actual Violence should proceed from them, and 'tis through their Mediation, and purely owing to them, that any Ex-
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ternal Act of Violence becomes Morally Evil: The very same Action, which, proceeding from vicious Purposes and Affections, becomes highly Criminal, is perfectly Blameless, when they are not the Foundation of it; otherwise, a Man would not be pronounced Innocent, who destroys his Neighbour's Life through Ignorance, or his Own, in a Fit of Frenzy. And we ought therefore to take the more diligent Heed, that we keep the Commandment, in this Refined and Extensive Sense of it; for whilst we are free from all *Outward Restraints*, we easily slide into the Transgression of it. Men who have not sufficient Degrees of Natural Courage, or want Favourable Opportunities, Actually to Defile their Hands with Blood, may yet Sacrifice their Neighbour in their Secret Thoughts and Wishes, and Indulge their Imagination in the View of those Mortal Wounds, which they dare not give; and Men, who are afraid to handle the Instruments of Death, may *shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words*, and pierce the Souls of their Brethren with the Expressions

fions of Cruelty, Despitefulness, and Scorn: But they may Justly also Fear that the Blood thus shed in Fancy and Conception only, shall be laid to their Charge, and that the Reward of the False, or Cruel Tongue, shall be, as the Iniquity it self is, *mighty and sharp Arrows with hot Burning Coals.* For who-soever is *angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in Danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Racha, shall be in Danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in Danger of Hell-Fire.* And this demonstrates the Excellence of the Gospel of Christ, that as Moral Duty, in Every Branch of it, is therein raised to the most Elevated Height of Perfection, so more especially does it Recommend and Promote the Exercise of *Universal Charity and Benevolence*, by an Absolute Prohibition of all *Strife, and Variance, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, and Wrath, and Hatred, and Envy, and Rancour, and Malice.* For these are some of those Works of the Devil which every Disciple of Christ has solemnly

lemnly Renounced, and whoever indulges them, dishonours the Profession, and forfeits the Privileges of the Gospel.

Let this then be the Use and Application of the Whole, That the *Heinousness* of the Sin of Murther should raise in us a Proportionable Abhorrence of it, and the utmost Esteem and Desire of those Qualities and Practices, which are most directly and fully Opposed to it; That we should stand at the utmost Distance from the utmost Danger; That we should not only have the tenderest Regard to the Preservation of our Neighbour's Life, but to the Conveniencies and Comforts of it; That instead of Violence and Injury we should abound in Acts of Beneficence; That Anger should be prevented by Habitual Meekness; Malice by Loving-kindness and Compassion; Revenge by Constant Endearments, and Hatred by Complacency and Delight. So shall we fully answer the End of the Commandment, and being thus Heavenly in our Dispositions here, we cannot fail of obtaining an Inheritance in those Mansions of Everlasting Peace, and Love, and Joy,
where

where our Saviour is gone to prepare a
Place for us.

*To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three
Persons and One God, be all Ho-
nour and Glory, Power and Domi-
nion henceforth and for evermore.
Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XI.

Christian Conversation.

PHILIP. I. 27.

Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

IN the context St. Paul lays before the *Philippians* some observations, relating to Himself and his Ministry in the Propagation of the Gospel: And in the words of the Text, he turns the Prospect upon a Point more nearly concerning Them and the Blessed effects of the Gospel upon them; leading off their Minds, from the Thoughts of Himself, into the consideration of their own Duty, under an Exhortation so very Full, though very Short, that whosoever shall diligently

ly attend to and Faithfully observe it, will effectually adorn and Finish the Character of a Christian: *Only let your Conversation be, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.* In discoursing on these words I shall

I. *First*, Endeavour to shew, what is to be understood by *Conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ*; And

II. *Secondly*, I shall propose some Directions to be observed, as Means of accomplishing such a Conversation.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, what is to be understood by *Conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ*. And in order thereunto, it should be observed that, in Holy Scripture, the Christian Society is sometimes styled a *City*, * and a *Kingdom*; † And the Members of this Society, or, the Subjects of Christ's Spiritual Kingdom are styled *Fellow Citizens with the Saints*. ‡ Agreeably to this Allusion, the Original word (*πολιτεύεσθε*) which we translate, *let your Conversation be*, is a Metaphorical expression, taken from the

* Hebr. xii. 22. † Colos. i. 13. ‡ Eph. ii. 19.

State and Condition of Citizens, or, Members of a Civil Community, denoting a Behaviour suitable to all the Laws and Customs of the City, or Community, to which they belong. And therefore, according to the just meaning of the expression in the Text, *Conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ* does not relate to our Words and Actions only, (as the Translation may seem to import) but signifies our Conformity to all the Laws and Injunctions assigned in the Gospel; or a faithful Discharge of all the Duties incumbent upon us, as We are Subjects of Christ's Kingdom, and Therefore obliged to conduct our selves according to the Rules of Polity established in that Kingdom, the positive Institutions of the Gospel.

Since then the Gospel gives Laws to our Souls, as well as to our Bodies, and as plainly requires us to Believe the Truths therein Revealed, as to Obey the rules of Practice therein prescribed; And since *Conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ* does, according to the just Interpretation of the expression, signify our Conformi-

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ty to all the Laws given in the Gospel; Hence it follows, that such a Conversation implies in it these two general Heads of Christian Duty, *Faith* and *Obedience*. And 'tis observable, that in the Distribution of Religion into these two general Heads of it, *Obedience* is to be understood as relating purely to *Practice*; for, otherwise, the Distinction would not stand good, because Faith it self, as I shall have further occasion to observe, Below, may justly be styled Obedience, as Obedience, in it's Abstracted and Extensive signification, denotes the Observance of any Command whatsoever.

1st, The First thing incumbent upon us, is *Faith*, or, a firm and stedfast Belief of the Truths revealed in the Gospel. For thus we are taught by our Blessed Saviour, in the first Demand which he made upon Mankind, at his entrance upon his Prophetical Office: * *The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and Believe the Gospel.* And the Indispen-

* Mark. i. 15.

able obligations of Faith are again very clearly and Emphatically represented in our Lord's Commission given to the Apostles: * *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* In which, and many other Texts, though *Trust*, or *Hope*, or other Christian Virtues may be implied in *Faith*; yet, without all doubt, the Act of *Believing*, or the Assent of the Understanding is Positively Injoined, and that as the Fundamental Duty, in the Profession of the Gospel.

But still, plain as this Law of *Faith* is; multitudes of Impious, or Self-conceited, or, Mistaken men do notoriously break through the Obligation of it. And Those, who are Disobedient to it, are ever straining their Thoughts, as other Transgressors are wont to do, in palliating their Guilt under various Excuses and Pretences.

Sometimes they are found labouring to

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

persuade themselves, that Fundamental Articles of *Faith* are matters of pure Speculation, which they may either take up or lay down at pleasure, without any Guilt or Danger, so long as they lead good Moral Lives, and form their actions on the principles of Virtue.

Indeed there are Innumerable Speculations, Innumerable Acts or Operations of the Understanding, which are not points of Duty, either in respect of Natural Obligation, or of Positive Precept, which may be Innocently Exercised or Suspend- ed at pleasure; And every man may embrace or reject whatsoever Propositions he pleaseth, concerning such points, according to his own measure and Manner of Thinking, without any Imputation of Guilt. But, how great a number soever there may be of Speculations, which are purely Arbitrary, and in themselves neither morally Good nor Evil; Or, how great soever the variety may be of those Propositions, which in themselves are, morally speaking, Indifferent, and may be Innocently either embraced or reje-

cted; yet can it not be concluded either from the Number or Variety of them, that we are at liberty to revolve and indulge whatever notions and speculations we please, and that we may Innocently and Safely yield our Assent to, or withhold our Assent from all propositions whatsoever, though finally terminating in the Understanding, in every case, according to our own Pleasure. Undoubtedly there are Blasphemous Thoughts of God, and various Propositions following from them, which cannot, without Sin, under the pure Obligations of Natural Religion, be voluntarily entertain'd and indulged in the Mind, though consider'd Absolutely in Themselves, and without any relation to Immorality flowing from them into Outward action.

And in respect of Positive Institutions, 'tis observable, that if the Bodily Passions or Affections, the Inferior Faculties in man, can be properly subject to Divine Laws; surely, the Understanding, the Superior and Nobler faculty, may well be thought capable of Pleasing or Provoking

voking God; of exalting it self in Stiffness and Arrogance against him, or of submitting it self Dutifully and Humbly to him, in Obedience to the Laws which he may prescribe to it: And 'tis further observable, that he hath actually prescribed such Laws to us; and our obligations to obey Them run manifestly and distinctly through the whole course of the Gospel. And since God hath laid Injunctions upon the Understanding, positively requiring its Assent to the Truths revealed in the Gospel; therefore our Refusing to yield such Assent to them, is not a matter of Indifferency in Speculation, but includes a Criminal Act of the Will, and is directly sinful, being a direct violation of the Divine Law; For *Sin is the transgression of the Law.*

But 'tis sometimes further urged by Unbelievers, that such our Refusal of Assent to Mysterious Truths is excusable, on account of our being unable to enter clearly and distinctly into the Nature and Reason of them: Whereas it ought to be well consider'd that if we could Distinctly and Fully comprehend the Reasons of

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them,

them, there would then be no virtue nor excellency in yielding Assent to them; there would then be no such Thing, as the Duty of *Belief* at all. For *Belief* in General signifies an Assent to something, grounded Purely upon Testimony; or, it consists in our being persuaded of the Truth of Things, which we ourselves do not otherwise know, than as we depend upon Them, purely on account of the confidence we repose in the Knowledge and Fidelity of the Person who relates them. And *Divine Faith* is Therefore an Excellency in Us, and acceptable to God, because we pay honour to him, by depending intirely upon his Knowledge and Veracity, in our Assent to the Truths which he hath revealed, though our own narrow Understanding cannot compass the Nature and Reasons of them.

And *Infidelity* is Therefore highly Sinful and Dangerous, because we do Thereby offer great Indignity to God, Refusing to give credit to his Testimony, and to depend upon his express Word for the Truth of any thing, but what we ourselves can clearly comprehend and account

count for. And it may be observed, as an Illustration of this Point, that when any Man of Superior understanding expressly declares the Truth of Something, which other Men of Lower Capacities cannot conceive, and which, according to their weak manner of Thinking, is Highly Improbable; Their Disbelief of such a Truth, which he professeth himself to be Clear in, must be a Provoking instance of their Disregard and Disrespect to him. For such Disbelief would be built upon a supposition, that their own Thoughts are as proper Standards of Truth as His, and they will not so far depend upon him, as to believe what he affirms to be True, and what he declares himself to have a perfect Knowledge of, because they have not the like Knowledge of it upon their own minds.

And since there is so great a Disparity between the Thoughts and Conceptions of one *Man* and another, Disparity sufficient to render it Reasonable and Necessary, in many cases, that One man should depend upon Another, for the Truth of Things, which Himself not only cannot
clearly

clearly perceive, but which seem to him very Improbable; How highly do we dishonour *God* by that Pride of Reason, which will not suffer us to believe the Truths he hath revealed, unless our own groveling Perceptions could reach the Height of them. *St. John* thus rouseth us into a just Sense of this flagrant Sin; * *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar.* And what Severities of punishment is such an Audacious Offender to expect?

Some Other Thin Pretences there are, whereby Unbelievers are wont to deceive themselves; which I should scarce have thought worthy of Particular Regard, if the Time would have allowed me to take particular notice of Them. Some Fallacious Suggestions may be more Plausible than others; But Vain and Groundless must All the Arguments, and Inexcusable and Unaccountable that manner of Thinking be, whereby men are led into an opinion, that they may be saved without Believing, though *God* hath

* 1 John v. 10.

exprefsly, and that in the Strongeft and moft Moving Terms declared, that they fhall not be faved, unlefs they Believe. And as he hath caution'd us againft *Infidelity* by the Terrour of Threatnings; he hath graciously Invited us to *Faith*, by the endearments of Promifes and Rewards. And as he is oftentimes pleas'd to crown Holinefs of Life with Present Bleffings, as pledges of the future and eternal Rewards promifed to Holy men; fo hath he oftentimes crowned the great Duty of *Believing*, with present Rewards, and thofe conferr'd in a Miraculous manner, as Pledges of that Future Happinefs which is prepared for all Thofe who are ftedfaft in Faith.

When our Bleffed Saviour reftored the * Ruler's little Daughter lying at the point of death; he made the Father's Faith, the condition of the Bleffing to be beftowed, *Fear not, believe only, and ſhe ſhall be made whole.* And when the two blind Men † applied themſelves to him for Relief, *he ſaith unto them,*

* Mark v. 23, 35, 36. Lu. viii. 50. † Mat. ix. 28, 29, 30.

believe

*believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, yea Lord. Then saith he unto them, according to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were open'd. And when the Woman was cured, who had thus expressed the stedfastness of her Faith, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole, He thus pronounceth of her, * thy Faith hath made thee whole. In all these, and other the like cases, 'tis abundantly manifest, that the act of Believing was the acceptable Duty, and ground of the reward. How remarkably was Noah recompensed for his Faith, for his firm dependance upon the Truth of what God had declared, in a Point far exceeding all Humane Expectation and Conception? And, to use the Apostle's expressions under this argument, The time would fail me to tell of Gedeon — and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, — obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword — women received their dead raised to life again.*

* Mark v. 34.

Upon

Upon the whole matter: The Reasonableness of God's giving a Law to our *Understanding*, that it may pay it's Homage and Submission to him, by a Ready and firm Assent to the Truths he hath Revealed: The certainty of his having given us such a Law requiring such acts of Faith in the *Understanding*, as the Tests of it's Subjection and Obedience: The Indispensable Obligations of this Law, arising from the Authority, Wisdom, and Veracity of the Lawgiver: The Perverseness of our *Will*; in our refusing to submit our *Understanding* to this Law: The Tremendous punishments denounced against *Infidelity*: The Glorious and Endless rewards; which are prepared in a future State, for all those who shall be found, in the solemn day of Judgment, to have paid entire Obedience to this great Law of Faith: The wonderful Demonstrations God hath given of his High, Peculiar esteem of this Duty, by crowning it frequently and Amply with Blessings in This life, as the Pledges and Earnest of that Inestimable reward which is laid up in store for it in
the

the World to come: These Considerations, and some others of Affinity with these, have in all ages effectually induced Judicious and Wise men, to suppress all Pride, and Arrogance and Self-conceit, rising up in their Breasts as the great springs of Infidelity, and to depend, with Humility and Stedfastness of Faith, upon God's Knowledge and Wisdom, rather than their own.

2dly, The Second Thing signified by *conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ*, is Obedience to the Precepts and Rules of Practice deliver'd in the Gospel. The Reality of our Faith is to be demonstrated by the Holiness of our Lives. Notwithstanding the Necessity of Faith, yet the Highest degrees of it, without Obedience attending it, and grafted upon it, are utterly insignificant, and unavailable to Salvation. * *By works a man is justified, and not by faith only. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* An Obedient and Spiritual Life is the evidence,

* Ja. ii. 24, 26.

which

which we are Indispensably required to give of our being *filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding*. It was the great Design of our Blessed Saviour's Manifestation in the flesh, to *destroy the works of the Devil*, to reduce us from the Dominion of Sin, and restore us to the similitude of God, by the Conformity of our Lives to his Holy Will revealed from Heaven. Whosoever *nameth the name of Christ*, does it Unprofitably and in Vain, if he fails of *departing from all Iniquity*. We can have no claim to the Privileges and Promises of the Gospel, but by our Fidelity in performing the Conditions of them. For we can have no Just hope of entring into Life, but by *keeping the Commandments*, or, by taking effectual care, that our Lives be, as the Commandments themselves are, *Holy, and Just, and Good*. 'Tis the Highest excellency of Conduct which we are to arrive at, before our Conversation can be indeed suitable to the Gospel; For 'tis to be observed, that besides the Rules prescribed to all our *Outward* actions, relating to God, our *Neighbours*, and our
Selves,

Selves, the Gospel requires from us many *Internal* Qualities and Dispositions, a great Variety of Graces, Transcendently Good in Themselves, as well as the Noblest Principles and Foundations of Action; insomuch that they plainly carry along with them, an abundant Intrinsic Evidence of their own Divine authority: Their Perfection testifies their Origin, and their Tendency shews that they are from Above; For they Improve and Refine our nature, and raise it to the utmost Perfection 'tis capable of, on this side Heaven.

That this Argument therefore may leave the more useful and lasting Impressions upon you, I shall pass on, from this General view of it, to a Short representation of as many of those Particular Graces, relating to it, as the Time will allow me to mention.

I. The First is *Purity of heart*. There is no true worth or excellence in the Fairest and most Beautiful outward behaviour, unless it be built upon a true Principle of Goodness Within. So curious a Gloss may possibly be laid, by an Artful

Artful hand, upon Hypocritical actions, that the most piercing eye of Man cannot reach to the Bottom of them, or, perceive any manner of Difference between Real holiness and these Counterfeit Images of it. But such masterly Appearances of Religion, which frequently gain the Admiration and Applause of Men, are ever an Abomination in the sight of God. Those who are most effectually restrain'd from Evil actions, or, excited to Good ones, by a Principle of Vain-Glory, or any other worldly view, freely entertaining and Indulging their minds with Evil Thoughts, may *seem to be religious*, but *their religion is vain*. They are not in Any respect obedient unto God; For the Visible part of their Lives is a Fraud put upon the World, to bribe Mankind into a good opinion of them; and their *Inward parts are very Wickedness*. Let us therefore continually revolve it in our Thoughts, that none but the *pure in heart shall see God*; either in spiritual *fellowship with him* upon Earth, or the eternal enjoyment of him in Heaven.

2. The second Christian Grace that I shall mention is *Humility in Mind and Thought*. *Be ye clothed with Humility*, saith the Apostle, intimating, that this virtue should be Particularly and Eminently Conspicuous in us. And, lest we should be mistaken in the Nature of that Humility, which becometh *the Elect of God*, we are elsewhere taught, in a Metaphor of the like Import, to *put on Humbleness of Mind*. For 'tis in this, and in all other Graces, as in the Case of *Purity*, that the Soul is the Seat of them; And if they have not gain'd Intire Possession and Dominion There, the most plausible external representations of them are always Insignificant, and often Sinful. A Man of the Haughtiest Mind may possibly behave himself, in the most Condescending and Humble manner, for the sake of being Thought humble and condescending, and of securing to himself, by Artifice and Address, that Deference and Respect from the World, which he would be sure to forfeit, by an Insolent and Overbearing Demand of it: But does he not, all the while, offend God the more,

more, by adding Hypocrisy to Haughtiness, and making the false Appearances of Humility Ministerial to his Pride? Humility then is, Principally, a Quality or Affection of the Soul; And 'tis under This view of it, that our Blessed Lord requires us to be *Humble, and to become as little children*: Not unlike to This is David's manner of expressing his Humility; *My heart is not haughty—My soul is even as a weaned Child*. How highly Necessary, Amiable, and Acceptable unto God this excellent Frame of Spirit is, himself hath declared by his Holy Prophet: * *Thus saith the High and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with Him also that is of an Humble spirit*. And as this Grace is Necessary to Qualifie us for receiving the Full Influences of the *Holy Spirit, dwelling in us*, here on Earth; So is it necessary to Qualifie us for the Attainment of happiness in Heaven. For if the Angels fell from Heaven by Pride; we can-

* Isa. lvii. 15.

not expect to be admitted There without Humility.

3. *Meekness* is a Distinguishing part of *Christian conversation*; all Causeless or Immoderate anger, the Raging heats of Sudden passion, and the more settled and fixed Sullenness of Malice and Revenge, together with all Railing and Reviling, Turbulency and Clamour being directly Opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel, which breathes nothing but Peace and Gentleness, Mildness and Forbearance.

And this Virtue of Meekness is not only required of us, as it is the great condition of our *receiving the Ingrafted Word*, in the Best manner, and to the Best Purposes, or, as it is a Disposition of mind, Best fitting and preparing us to receive Spiritual and Saving Knowledge; But it is recommended to us, in a Peculiar manner, by the Command and Example of our Blessed Lord, * *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your Souls.* Since his Life was one uninterrupted Scene of Invincible

* Mat. xi. 29.

Meekness, under the Worst of Treatment; since Compassion, and Forgiveness, and Beneficence were the only Returns which he made to the basest Indignities, and most virulent Provocations; since the *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit* was thus Inviolate and Illustrious in Him; and since we are Infallibly assured, that *if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*; Therefore Angry and Boisterous Men can have no just reason to esteem themselves his Followers, or to hope for his Favour. No Soul, but what is adorn'd with Meekness, can Possibly be received into those Mansions Above, where Tranquillity and Serenity, Concord and Complacency shall be the Ornament and Delight of all the Blessed Inhabitants for ever.

4. *Charity* is a Principal Qualification in a Christian. The Necessity and the Excellency of this Virtue will easily appear to any one, who does but consider, that if the most Eminent Duties to *God* and *Man* stand separated from it, they are Trivial and Contemptible. * *Though*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3.

I had all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am Nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. A man's whole Life spent in the most exalted Acts of Faith and Devotion towards God, and in a most Laborious and Expensive course of Beneficence to his Neighbours, if this Grace should not be the Foundation of it, would neither have any Excellency or Value in it self, nor give Him any claim or Title to a Reward.

Our Blessed Lord hath taught us, that *on these two Commandments* (wherein the Love of God, and of our Neighbour is required) *hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Charity does, at once, most Effectually Excite us to Duties, carry us on, with Delight, to the Accomplishment of Them, and recommend them as *Odours of a sweet smell, sacrifices acceptable, well pleasing to God.* Charity is the *Band of Perfectness*: The Harmonious and Blessed union of Hearts and Minds, amongst Christians, is grounded

in

in it; and the Connection and Completion of all Other virtues depend upon it; *Faith* it self is made Perfect by it; and the seeds of it cannot fail of producing a Plentiful Harvest of *Good Works*. 'Tis the Purest and the Noblest offering that Man can possibly make to God, in this Life; and the Eternal exercise of it is to be the Source of eternal Bliss in a Future State. All those therefore, who are Destitute of Charity, must Unavoidably be Excluded from the mansions of Bliss.

5. *Hope* is another great Branch of *Christian Conversation*. 'Tis, in it's own nature, a most Powerful Instigation, and pusheth us on, in a manner not easily resistible, through the Use of the Means, to an attainment of the End we have in View; And, as Future happiness is the Commanding Aim and View of sincere Christians; the Hope of it is ever Irritating and Pressing them forward, in the Pursuit of it. *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure**. Whilst the men of the

* 1 John iii. 3.

World do either yield themselves entirely up to their Corruptions, or, at best, struggle but very Faintly against them; the Faithful Servants of *Christ* are Strenuous, and Constant, Resolute and Brave in performing the great work of Sanctification. For they *have Hope as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entreteth into that within the veil**; into the regions of Eternal Glory, which were Typified under the Law, by the *most Holy place*, within the Veil. Whilst we are tossed, in our spiritual course, by the Sharpest Trials and Afflictions, by the swelling Waves of our Sinful Passions within, or the most Ruffling and Violent Temptations from without; the Power of a Lively Hope still secures us from Shipwreck, abundantly strengthens and supports us, amidst all Dangers, and preserves us Steddy and Immoveable in our Voyage, till we Safely arrive at the Haven, where we would be. Let us therefore, under all our Infirmities, and in all our Distresses, have Recourse,

* Hebr. vi, 19.

for Succour and Consolation, to * *the Lively hope of an Inheritance Incorruptible; to which we are begotten by the Resurrection of Christ Jesus from the Dead.*

But I have so Few minutes left, for addressing my self further to you, that I must go on to the

II. Second General Head of this Discourse, Namely, *Some Short Directions to be observed, as Means of accomplishing that Conversation, which becometh the Gospel of Christ.* And

I. Let us frequently read the *Holy Scripture* with Reverence, as well as Attention; ever Considering it, as the Word of *God* himself, and the Indispensable Rule of Our Conduct. If we Mean any thing, if there be any Reality in our professing a Belief of the Scripture; let that Reverence be paid to it, which is its Just Due. We shall one day find, that we are obliged to pay the same Awful Regard, and Exact Obedience, to the Word of God, as if we should hear him pronounce it by a Miraculous Voice from

* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Heaven. When we once come to a Particular, Intire knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, by reading them with Constancy and Serioufness; and when our minds are become habitually affected with a deep Sense of their *Divine* Authority; Then the Promises and the Threatnings in them will be apt to work so Strongly and Effectually upon us, that we shall be Restless in our selves, till our *Obedience is fulfilled*.

2. Let us entertain our Minds with Daily meditations upon the *Omnipresence* and *Omniscience* of God. Hope of *Secresy* is a Principal Instigation to Sin. When the Wicked think themselves Secure, that no Eye can see them; then they transgress, without Restraint and Reserve. Vain and Unthinking Man! who would thus build up Safety for himself without a Foundation; who thus hopes to intrench himself in a Shadow, and *whose trust is in a Spider's Web!* Darkness may conceal us from Humane Eyes; but we Still lie open to the Sight of God; for *the Darkness is no Darkness with Him*, and to Him *Darkness and Light*

Light are both alike. Let This consideration sink deep into our Minds, and for ever remain There; and Then Audacious, and Presumptuous indeed must we be, if we can persuade our selves, Wilfully to commit even the most Secret of Sins, since All sins are equally manifest to Him, who is Present in every place, *beholding the Evil and the Good.*

And as this Persuasion is a Powerful restraint from Sin; so will it supply us with abundant Support and Satisfaction, under the most Laborious Duties Incumbent upon us. How can we grow *weary in well doing*? How can we fail of being Refreshed, and Revived and Delighted in sustaining the Difficulties of the Christian Life, whilst we consider, that none of our Holy Labours can be Lost, or Disregarded; that God is continually with us, observing and weighing our Fidelity to Him and his Laws, and that all our Duties which are thus particularly seen and observed, will be for ever Punctually Remembred, and followed with an Eternal Reward?

3. Let us accustom our selves to Daily reflections

reflections upon *Death*. For They are apt to contribute greatly towards Removing the main *Obstacles* of Christian Conversation. When a Covetous man, is running on most Eagerly, in the Pursuit of Riches; will it not stop him in his Career, to think seriously, that if he should Successfully gain the Possession of them, yet the Day will Inevitably and Soon come on, when he must bid a Final adieu to the World, and Finally leave his Riches behind him? Or, would it not check Any Man, in a sinful Course of Sensual Pleasures, to Think that his *Unavoidable* Portion is, that the Body, which he is thus enslaved by, shall very Speedily become a Prisoner of the Grave, and *the Worm shall feed sweetly on him*? Or, would it not bring Any man down, from the Height of Ambition, to consider Thoroughly, that All Glory, besides That in Heaven, is Fading, and in a very little time all Mortals, High and Low, shall lie mixed in the Common dust together? One would think it scarce possible that any kind of Temporal gratifications should prevail with us to neglect our Salvation,
if

if this Thought were but Continually kept up in our minds, that all these gratifications will Presently be past and gone, and as if they had never been; *As if they had never been*, in every respect, but that the Influence they have had upon our Lives will be Particularly examined, and receive its Just recompence, *in the Judgment of the great day.*

4. Let *the Future Judgment* be another Subject of our Daily Meditations.

That any man should be under a firm Persuasion and Expectation, that he Must hereafter appear before *Christ our Judge*, and before all the World, as Certainly and as Plainly, as we now appear before one another, at the same time his Vices appearing as plainly as his Person, and that he should, under this Expectation, wilfully suffer himself to be defiled by Sin, and to Continue under the Habit of it, is Unaccountable. How confusedly and Ghastly will be the Consciences and the Countenances of all Impenitent Sinners, whilst they stand a Spectacle before the Judgment Seat, with all their Abominations about them; And when they observe
the

the vast Assemblies of Saints and Angels, disapproving and disdaining them for their Folly in having neglected so Great Salvation? How will they Despise and Hate Themselves, for having been prevailed on by Trifles, in their State of Probation on Earth, to lose all the Opportunities of being Happy, which now can never be retrieved; and to expose themselves to the Direful Sentence of Condemnation, now to be pronounced, and never to be Revoked? And as These reflections are of such near concernment to us, and in Themselves so Grating and Shocking, that if they be well attended to, they will not suffer a man to persist, easily, in a course of Sin and Danger; so the serious Thoughts of the Triumphant and Transporting Joy, which, in that Final Day of Retribution, shall shine in all Holy men, are abundant Encouragements to the Faithful Discharge of their Duty. With what unspeakable Delight will they Then Caress and Applaud themselves, when they see themselves applauded and caressed by the Judge of the World, and by all the Ranks and Orders
of

of Angels, for their Wisdom in having seen through, and Rejected all the Deceitful Temptations of Sin, in the former Transient State, for the sake of that Everlasting Reward which is now to be Immediately bestowed upon them? O Blessed Reception! Blessed Consummation! Who can forbear spending his whole Life in making Provision for it?

5. Let us entertain our minds with Daily Thoughts of *Happiness in Heaven*. It must needs be, that This World will engage our Affections, whilst we do not suffer it to be rival'd by the Other; It must needs be, that we shall pursue Temporal Satisfactions, whilst no Other Satisfactions are so much as Thought of. But if we can persuade our selves to rouse our Thoughts, and carry them up into a Survey of that *Heavenly Countrey*, which is Revealed and tendred to us in the Gospel, Comparing the Happiness of That State with the Enjoyment of This, we shall easily and presently be convinced, that Common Prudence obligeth us, to govern our Lives by the Rules of Religion. For in such a Comparison, it will unde-

undeniably appear, that Things present have the Advantage over Future Happiness, in no Other respect but This, That they Are present. Whereas all the Other advantages, which lie on the Other Side, do so strongly bear down this One, that 'tis of very little or no Weight, and Unworthy of our Regard. Though worldly Satisfactions are present, yet the Vanity of them is such, that indeed they should not even be Compared with the Bliss of Heaven, if our Folly did not make such a Comparison Necessary, to prevent our running into Fatal Mistakes.

And if Temporal Happiness were not, in its Nature, so Empty and Unsatisfying as it is; yet the Duration of it is so very Short, that it does not deserve our Notice, any Otherwise, than that our taking of it may serve to render it Little and Contemptible in our Sight. For what Esteem can be due to those enjoyments, which Flie from us, as soon as ever we Overtake them; which Appear and Vanish in one and the same moment, never failing to Leave us, at least as Unsatisfied as they Found us. But the Duration of Future Happiness

Happiness, is equal to the other perfecti-
ons of it. 'Tis an *Eternal*, as well as an
Exceeding Weight of Glory. But Here
we must not Attempt Description; for
Words cannot reach the conceptions of
Eternity. Surprizing *Eternity* of Bliss!
In all Good men, at once the Parent of
Holy Admiration, and Ineffable Joy! Can
any man's Spirits fail him, in *running the*
Race set before him, whilst he maintains
in his Thoughts, a Distinct View of the
Incorruptible and *Eternal Crown of Glory*
prepared for him?

But as to This, and the Other *Medita-*
tions which I have been proposing to
you, give me leave to intreat you,
that Every one of them may be *Frequent*
and *Habitual*; for the Efficacy and all
the great Benefits arising from them de-
pend, chiefly, upon our being *Constant*,
as well as *Attentive* in the Exercise of
Them. And if an account could be taken
of all the Souls, now in a state of Mise-
ry; not any One perhaps could be found
There, but who had neglected to exercise
himself *Habitually*, with These, or the
like Meditations, and to Implore the *Di-*

vine Assistance, that they might be crown'd with Success. For 'tis not to be Imagin'd, that the Habitual Exercise of Them, attended with proper Applications to the Throne of Grace, should consist with an Habitual Course of Sin, and Final Impenitency. Therefore

6. *Lastly*, To our Meditations, and all other means of accomplishing a *Conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ*, let us add Constant and Fervent Prayer for the Directions and Aids of the *Holy Spirit*; That he may enlighten us with a most Affecting Sense of all the Revelations made from Heaven; That he may sufficiently Quicken us in Discerning, and Strengthen us in Resisting all the Powers of Temptation; That He may Inflame us with an Ardency of the Love and Desire of Spiritual and Heavenly Things; and that His Continual Motions and Influences upon us, in all Circumstances, may Effectually enable us to *make our Calling and Election sure*. Many and clear are the Encouragements and Promises in the Scripture, that God will *give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*. And if the
Fervency

Fervency of our Prayers be but Equal to the Greatness of our Wants; Our Prayers will Ever be Graciously received, and our Wants Abundantly Supplied.

There are many other Particulars, nearly relating to the Argument before us; which cannot be taken into the Narrow compass of this Discourse. The Time will not allow me to enlarge the Observations and Directions, which I have been pressing upon you, as Necessary to your Edification; as the best Testimonies I can give of my Gratitude, for your Kind Acceptance and Encouragement of my Imperfect Labours amongst you; and as the Effects of my Earnest Desire, that You may be ever Truly mindful of the *Conditions*, and Faithful in using the Means of Your Salvation, under the two General Heads of Evangelical Duty, *Faith* and *Obedience*; Which I have, from the many Years of my Duty and Ministry in this Place, studied to Represent and Enforce, under the Many Particulars contain'd in Them, for Your Improvement in *Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding*.

I have frequently used my utmost Endeavours,

deavours, and Weak indeed have those endeavours been, to give you a Just Sense of the Great Articles of *Faith*, to Establish and Confirm you in the Stedfast Belief of them, and to guard you against the Fallacious Arguments, and Plausible Insinuations of Unbelievers. But the *Practical Duties* of Religion have, much more Frequently, been the Subjects of my Discourses; because these Duties are branch'd out into Greater Numbers and Varieties, than the Objects of Faith are; and the Temptations to Violate or Neglect them, more Numerous too; Snares ever surrounding us Without, and our own Hearts ever ready to betray us Within; every Circumstance of Life being attended with Peculiar Difficulties, and almost every Hour of Life bringing along with it Fresh Trials and Hazards: And yet, if amidst all these Multiplicities of Duties and Dangers, we should fail of performing *Sincere* and *Universal* Obedience, *Faith cannot save us*.

But I cannot close my Ministrations to you, without offering up my Humble and Earnest Prayer to God, that he may graciously

ously Pardon the Imperfections attending them; and, that the Weaknesses and Defects of my Instructions and Exhortations, offer'd to You, may be supplied by the All-sufficient Influences of the *Holy Spirit* upon You, *guiding you into all Truth*, Defending you against all Dangers and Temptations, and Adorning you with all Christian Graces; that You may be Victorious in your Spiritual Warfare, and finally attain to the Everlasting Mansions of the Blessed Above. *And the very God of Peace Sanctifie you wholly: And I pray God, your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and One God, be ascribed all Honour and Praise, and Thanksgiving, now henceforth and for evermore.

S E R M O N XII.

The Omnipresence of God.

Being the last Sermon the AUTHOR
Preach'd; and Publish'd by his Direction.

JER. XXIII. Part of the 24th Verse.
*Do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith
the Lord?*

THESE Words denote one of
the Peculiar, Incommunicable
Attributes of God; And if it
were not utterly Inconsistent with Infinity, to admit of Degrees, This Excellency in the Divine Nature, at least excepting *Eternity*, might seem the most Surprizing and Transcendent of Any. There are in the Holy *Angels*, and in Holy *Men* too, men Influenced and Governed by the Divine Spirit, fair Images of the *Veracity*, the *Wisdom*, the *Goodness*,

ness, the Mercy, and the Compassion of God; which yet are all Infinite in Him: The vast measures of *Power* which are imparted to some Creatures, especially to the Angelick Host, are some Representation of *Omnipotence*; That *Steddi-ness* of Soul, which is the Portion of Just men made Perfect, looks a little like the *Immutability* of God: But in *All* the Ranks and orders of Creatures there is scarce any *Semblance* of Immensity or Omnipresence to be found. Whilst we contemplate the Vastest even of *Celestial* Bodies, the Evidence of their Magnitude is also the Evidence, that they are determined in their Extension; And there is nothing in them, nor in any created Being, which can suggest to us the Notion of *Immensity*, in like manner, as the notions, of Infinite Power, or Goodness, or some other Perfections in the Deity, are Suggested by the Conceptions we have of *such measures of those Attributes*, as are from Him Graciously derived upon our selves. And as there are no footsteps or traces of this Divine Perfection to be found in the visible World,

'tis Therefore apt to fill our minds with the *Higher* admiration of the Great God, in whom alone it is found. But still 'tis in this, as in various other instances of Things Wonderful in Themselves, that, though the *Mode* or *Manner* of it be very *Abstruse*, and Difficult, and Puzzling to our conceptions, yet the Certainty of the *Thing* is deducible from our *Natural* Notions of God, and that Deduction is plainly confirmed in his *Holy Word*; *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord?* In discoursing on which words, I shall

I. *First*, Endeavour to Evince and Illustrate the truth of this Proposition, *that God is Omnipresent*, and.

II. *Secondly*, Draw some Practical Inferences from it.

I. I shall endeavour to Evince and Illustrate the truth of this Proposition, *that God is Omnipresent*.

And the Evidence of this, arising from our natural notions of God, will appear, in a few words, by considering those other kinds of Presence, which are opposed to Immensity, and are, by Metaphysical Writers, represented under
Terms,

Terms, not very Familiar and obvious, but which do admit of an explication very Easy, and very useful too in the Illustration of this Subject. *Bodily Substances* are said to be in Place *Circumscriptively*, that is, their parts are answerable to, and confined by the limits of that Space in which they Subsist, and do exclude every other Body from it. Created *Spirits* are said to be in Place *Definitively*, that is, they are so determined to one Space, that they cannot at the same time be in another; And yet it cannot be said of Them, that their Parts are answerable to the Parts of Space containing them, because Spiritual Substances are void of Figure and Parts, and for that reason they admit of the Existence of other Substances in the same Space wherein themselves are confined.

Thus a Humane Soul exists in the same Space with a Humane Body. In one of these two ways all creatures do exist in Place, and That Being, which does not exist in Space according to either of them, must be Immense or Omnipresent; for there is no Possibility of Subsistence, but in

in one of these three kinds of Presence. As therefore 'tis demonstrable from our Natural notions of God that he is a *Spirit*, and that he is not a *limited* or *Confined*, but an *Infinite* Spirit, therefore neither of the two first kinds of Presence can belong to him, and by consequence he is Omnipresent. And as this seems intirely agreeable to our Reason, and clearest manner of Thinking; so is the same Consequence deducible from our natural notions of God, considering him as Creatour. For, if every Created Being be the Immediate Effect of Himself; Then Himself is Present to every Created Being. And as Creation does evince this Attribute, so does Conservation too. If he should withdraw his *Support* from Material Substances, their Dissolution must Immediately follow. For they are no more Capable of Sustaining than they are of Producing themselves. And this Result of our natural notions is plainly Confirmed in Holy Scripture. For the *Third Verse* of the *First Chapter* to the *Hebrews* does not only comprehend *all Corporeál*, but *Spiritual* Beings also: *He upholdeth*

All things by the Word of his Power: And there can be no room for Doubt, whether He, who by his own *Immediate Arm upholdeth all Beings*, be present in *All Places*. And, that he is declared by himself to be so in the Text, is plain, because the Terms *Heaven* and *Earth* do comprehend the whole Creation, and are in this sense used elsewhere in Sundry places of Holy Scripture.

Accordingly, the Prophet *Isaiab* also does, under the use of the same terms elegantly introduce the Almighty asserting to himself the same Attribute; * *Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool*; signifying to us, that the Persons of Earthly Princes are not more certainly present upon their Thrones, do not more certainly fill the Space from the Throne to the Footstool, than he himself is present in all places, or in all the Parts of the Universe.

Some Speculative writers have carried the Omnipresence of God into a still Higher Signification, intimating thereby, that he is not only present with every

* Isa. lxvi. 1.

Being in the World, but that he fills a Space which they apprehend to be beyond the limits of all Created Substances, and not possess'd by any Being but Himself. For when we give our Thoughts the reins, and let them run freely through the Compass of the Universe, till they advance as High as the Third Heavens, beyond which we do not know, that there is any Created Substance, or, till they advance as High as Thoughts are capable of advancing, they cannot at last so fix upon any point, as to exclude the conception of Space beyond it. This is styled *Imaginary Space*; and, if any such space there be, as it would perhaps be somewhat Difficult to prove, that there is not, we cannot but believe that God is present There. And this notion seems to be favoured by the Holy Scripture, wherein we have an Acknowledgment made unto God of his Immensity, under this Expression, * *The Heaven, and heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee.*

If we should carry our Thoughts back as far as God's Existence in the

* 1 Kings viii. 27.

moment *Immediately* preceding the Creation of Bodies, we might be apt to conceive, that there was then a Space wherein he himself, and himself alone Existed, and wherein he produced this visible frame of things. And yet this is liable to some Difficulties, which do not affect the notion of Imaginary Space, extended beyond Corporeal Substances, and wherein God can, if he pleaseth, create other Worlds, by the same uncontrollable Power, which produced the Heaven and the Earth. Thus may men raise and indulge their Pious Admiration, whilst they do, as far as their imperfect Capacities allow them, contemplate the Incomprehensible Essence of God whose Presence admits of no Limitation. And surely an *Unconfined, Unlimited* Presence of God must be signified by the Holy Psalmist, in his Beautiful Expostulation concerning this Point, *Psal. cxxxix. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit? Or, whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there. If I take the Wings of the Morn-*
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ing, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even There shall thy Hand lead me, and thy Right-hand shall hold me. Swift are the Wings of the Morning, those sprightly Rays, the Messengers of Light, which in a Moment dart themselves from Heaven to Earth; And yet, if our Activity were equal to Theirs, we should be utterly Incapable of flying, or being in the least removed, from the Face of *Him* who is present to Every Being, and according to the Apostle's Expression, with which I shall conclude this Head, *Who filleth all in all**. Hence therefore I proceed

II. To draw some Inferences from this Doctrine of God's *Omnipresence*. And,

1st, The Belief of it should raise in us the utmost *Reverence* towards him. Majesty does in so forcible a Manner command the tribute of Respect from us, that we cannot easily prevail with our selves to with-hold it. The Presence of a Prince does Naturally strike awful Apprehensions upon our Minds, and we must offer some violence to our selves

* Eph. i. 23.

before we can either prevent or rase out such Impressions. How ought we then to Revere the Almighty, *in whom we live and move and have our Being*. Those Profane and Impious men, who make their *Senses* the sole Judges in Determining the Existence of Things, do of course exclude such Reverential Thoughts of God as are deducible from the Belief of his Omnipresence; But the Wiser part of Mankind, very well knowing that the Evidence of *Faith* is no less to be depended on, than That of Sense, and Therefore being abundantly assured, that the Essence or Substance of God fills Heaven and Earth, do, on that account, indulge in their minds the most Honourable and Awful conceptions of him. For what Bounds can be Prescribed to the veneration of him whose Essence is unbounded and Infinite? Or, how is it possible for us to reflect Attentively upon our being in his Immediate Presence without the Prostration of our Souls before him?

2^{dly}, The Belief of his Omnipresence should introduce and preserve upon our Minds, an Habitual Fear of Offending him

him. Those Actions which cannot bear the *Light* do naturally seek for *Darkness* as their Refuge. And this is *one* Reason why Wickedness is, in Scripture, styled *Works of Darkness*. Fear of Discovery may oblige Flagitious Men to proceed with some Degrees of Caution and Reserve in that part of their Behaviour which falls under publick Observation: But when close Retirement becomes the Scene of Action, and they are no longer apprehensive that the Eye of *Man* can reach them, they then lay aside all Restraint, and freely execute all the Imaginations of their Hearts which are Evil continually. Thus do Men vainly flatter themselves with the Hopes of Security, not considering that they are all the while *Manifest in the Sight of God*, from whose Eyes the thickest Darkness cannot Cover us, and whose Presence the most Solitary Recess does not exclude. For, if we should find out some of those lonely Apartments of Nature where no Living Creatures dwell, and There take up our Abode; even There should we find the Almighty; There

There would our Actions, and our Thoughts too, be as Conspicuous to Him, as if we were placed in the publick View of the World. And what Consideration can more powerfully restrain us from Offending God, than a deep Sense of this his Continual Presence with us? To what height of Impudence and Defiance must we be arrived, when we dare, as it were to Affront God to his Face, by doing those things which are displeasing to him, at the same time that we consider him as *Beholding us*? Or is it indeed possible to consider him as Beholding us, to have such a strong and lively Conviction of his Omnipresence upon our minds, as we ought to have, and yet be prevailed upon to commit such actions before him, as we should not dare to Commit before even an Equal, or Inferiour?

3^{dly}, The Belief of God's Omnipresence should encourage us to go through every part of our Obedience and Duty with Pleasure and Delight. And the Truth of this observation may in some measure be Illustrated even from the Principles and Practices of Hypocrites themselves. Their Industrious Display of Good

works before men, that they may receive Praise from Them, shews how apt we are to be delighted with an apprehension, that our virtues are observed and approved, notwithstanding that they do most sinfully abuse and misapply this Apprehension. 'Tis undoubtedly *Natural* to desire that our Light so shine as to be observed; But 'tis the *Corruption* of this Desire to wish, and study, and contrive, that our virtues may be seen of men, purely in order to gain Praise from *them*; As it is, on the other hand, the *Improvement* of this natural Desire, to propose to our selves the being observed and approved by the *Almighty*, or by men for the sake of Advancing *his* Honour, and *Their* Spiritual advantage. There is nothing more certain, than that virtue is more agreeable to our *Nature* than vice, if our nature be considered in its purest and best State; But such are our Depravities, that we should in many instances give vice the Precedency, and neglect the tedious Prescriptions of virtue, if we were not firmly persuaded, that God does *Regard and will not forget our work and labour that proceedeth of love.*

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But on the other hand, how must the sense of his Presence with and Observation of us, animate us with Courage and Resolution to surmount the Difficulties and hardships of our Spiritual warfare, and administer Pleasure in the discharge even of the most painful and laborious Duties? How must this enable us, when we are beset with the most violent Temptations, Faithfully and Bravely to exert our selves in opposition to them and to go through the utmost uneasiness of a Strenuous Resistance? With what Joy must our holy Exercises be attended, when we withdraw our selves from the World, and pour out our Souls before him in Devotion, whilst we are not only assured that he is with us, but also feel and are *Satisfied* with the Delights of his Presence? When we refuse to comply with the vicious customs of the world, and suffer the utmost Vexations, Reproaches and Injuries for so doing, yet even in these we can take a pleasure, under a Sense of his Approbation and Favour, and under a firm persuasion, that not the least of our Sufferings for his Truth and Righteousness sake is unregarded, but all are

faithfully *noted in the book of his Remembrance*, and will be amply rewarded in the day of Retribution.

4^{thly}, The Belief of God's Omnipresence is the Source of Consolation in that time of Pressing Necessity and Distress, when there is no Room for any Comfort but what Religion supplies, the Great and Solemn hour of Death. They who are near to Dissolution, and have therefore finally passed through all the Seasons and all Possibility of Temporal Comfort, must needs be Sollicitous and Jealous and Suspicious concerning the Important Events of the Soul's Separation from the Body; But all this uneasiness is at once prevented by the Thoughts of God's Omnipresence, if our lives have but been suitable to our Belief of it. Satan is in Scripture styled the Prince of the Power of the Air; And it hath been an antient opinion, that, being thus placed in these lower regions, he is permitted to seize upon the Souls of wicked men as soon as ever they are separated from the Body, and to hurry them into Torment. But this opinion it self cannot molest us, in that Thoughtful and Busy
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and Shocking hour, if a Belief of this Attribute be firmly rooted and established in us. For the *Prince of the Power of the Air* cannot exercise any Dominion over us, or offer any violence to us, when the Almighty himself is present with our souls, and will effectually defend us from the fury of the Destroyer. The Holy Scripture teacheth, that when the Body returns to the Earth from whence it came, the Spirit returns into the Hands of God that gave it. We shall then have no Occasion to be solicitous for the Condition of the Soul after its Separation, since God who made it receives it Immediately from the Body, and disposes of it accordingly. 'Tis incumbent upon us *now* to consider and revolve these things with Attention, and to render them familiar to our minds, because That final Period will quickly come upon every one of us, when we cannot avoid being solicitous and intense about them, and shall find, that there is nothing else worthy of being revolved or regarded.

5thly and Lastly, The Belief of God's Omnipresence should convince us, that
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the Fruition of him in Heaven must be attended with Unspeakable Glory and Delight. It must be a necessary Consequence, that if God's Essence be unlimited and infinite, the full *Manifestation* of it must be most Highly Glorious and Delightful; And That full Manifestation of it is reserved for us in Heaven. *Now* our Assent to the Divine Presence is grounded upon the Effects of it, and the Revelations of it in Holy Scripture. But That, which is now the Object of our Faith, will Then become the Object of our Sight. Though *our* Minds, shaded and veil'd, and darkned by our Bodies, cannot at present conceive how *That* is, yet undoubtedly Spirits have a clear Perception and Knowledge of one another, and Perfect Entercourse and Communications with one another; And even, as to our future Knowledge of the Infinite Spirit, *God himself*, we are taught that *we shall know him even as also we are known*. How we shall be rendred capable of the *Beatifick Vision*, we cannot tell, God knoweth; But we are positively assured, that we shall see him *as he is*. As our Sight is now the great Means of
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our fullest Apprehensions and clearest Conceptions; Therefore, when the Scriptures teach that we shall *see God as he is*, they mean that we shall have the most *Clear*, and *full* and perfect Knowledge, the most intire Perception of the Immensity, as well as of the other Excellencies and Perfections of his Being. When we now set our selves to Think *where* God existed before there was any such Thing as *Place*, according to our Present Notions of Place, our Minds are Confused, and utterly astonished and oppressed under the Weight of the Contemplation: But, in the future State, wherein our Minds shall be refined and Inlarged into a Capacity of seeing God as he is, *This Great Mystery* shall be Unfolded, and the Thoughts of it, in which we have been amazed and lost Before, shall clear up and become Distinct and Adequate, and Unspeakably Transporting, in That Glorious Eternal Day, wherein we shall be admitted into That Glorious Inaccessible Light in which God dwells, and to which no Man upon Earth, not a Prophet, nor an Apostle could ever Approach; *for in his Light shall we see Light*. And how will

will the Perfect Knowledge of an Infinite Being at once strike us with Wonder and Love and Joy? How shall we then applaud ourselves, for having been so wise as to neglect all worldly Satisfaction, for the Sake of that Immense Glory which shall be revealed; in Comparison of which, we shall be abundantly convinced, that all past Enjoyments were Trivial and Contemptible, and as Nothing. Such, undoubtedly, will our Sentiments and Judgement of Things Then be; And Therefore it ought to be the great Business of our Lives to Possess our Souls of the same Necessary and Just Conceptions and Thoughts *now*, that they may become Principles of Action Now, and, under the Powerful Influence of them, we may so pass through Things Temporal, that we finally lose not the Things Eternal: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, by the gracious Influence of his Holy Spirit, through the Merits and Intercession of *Jesus Christ* our Lord; *To whom be ascribed all Honour; and Praise, and Thanksgiving, now, henceforth and for Evermore. Amen.*

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